Acting Authoritatively:

How Authority is Expressed through Social Action among the Bentian of Indonesian Borneo

Kenneth Sillander

ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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1. Introduction

This is a study of authority among the Bentian, a small-scale, non-centralized society of Indonesian Borneo. It is especially concerned with describing the use and constitution of authority among the Bentian, although it is also intended to give a general ethnographic account of this previously little-described population. As a study of authority, it differs from most of its kind in being a general study of authority rather than being restrictively concerned with the institutional exercise of authority or with political authority. It represents a broad sociological analysis of how authority is bound up with action in social life, formal as well as informal. Its principal objective can be defined as an exploration, in the society under investigation, of what is authoritative and why, and of how authority is applied in, and established through, social processes of authorization.

In the present chapter I give an account of how I became interested in authority as a dissertation topic, and describe my approach to authority. I will also provide an outline of the study and a short description of the fieldwork upon which it is based.

Relatives, Government, and God

It was a speech given at a Bentian wedding that first gave me the idea to write about authority. Speeches are, as far as I know, always given at Bentian weddings, usually by men who stand up holding a white plate, a sign indicating their assignment to the task by the sponsors, and the occasion's status as an instance of "tradition" (*adat*). Most of these men are referred to as *manti,* that is, they are regarded as family or village leaders — and as having some degree of authority. The explicit purpose of wedding speeches is said to be to instruct the bride and bridegroom about how to lead a married life. What I found striking about them was, however, that the speech makers usually seemed to take advantage of the opportunity to also talk about whatever other topics they wanted to address, often with very little reference to the subject that they were officially assigned to consider. This frequently made these speeches appear inordinately long, especially as they were given (as is customary) just before the principal meal was served to the guests. The particular speech that gave me the idea to make authority the topic of my dissertation was delivered at a wedding in which four men gave speeches, all of whom were more concerned with other issues than marriage. Two of these speeches, which were given by men from other villages than the one where the wedding took place, considered a land right conflict with a neighboring logging company. One of these men, who was unexpected and had not been invited to speak beforehand, but was asked to do so as soon as he arrived because of his high *manti* status, made it his issue to explain that, despite sometimes contrary appearances, the government (I., *pemerintah*), on the one hand, and

companies (I., *perusahan*), on the other, are not the same thing, and that challenging the authority of the one, therefore, is not equivalent to contesting that of the other. The second of these men, who like the first argued for resistance to logging company claims on village lands, emphasized how the forest constitutes the foundation of "tradition" (*adat*): "if the forest is destroyed, how is one then to obtain the plants needed for rituals, and how is one to arrange any rituals whatsoever, if one is not able to make a living in the first place?" The third speech, made by a man assigned to speak for the bridegroom's party, consisted mainly of an account of the routines of his own everyday life at the nearby logging camp, seemingly to legitimize the "non-traditional" life that he was leading there, not cultivating a rice field, and working for the same logging company that was criticized in the two first speeches.

Even though the first three speeches were all obviously concerned with authority — in the sense of representing attempts at exerting influence over the listeners and authorizing one or another course of action — it was particularly the fourth speech, given by a man representing the bride, that kindled my interest in the subject. In this speech, the speaker (Ma Putup), most noted for his idiosyncratic shamanic skills, began by addressing his favorite topic: official recognition of Kaharingan, the local religion. Ma Putup explained that Kaharingan is just as much a religion as any other religion, and that all people, regardless of religious affiliation, are equal before God. He then gradually turned to a presentation of some general conditions pertaining to virtuous and successful adult life, and consequently came to address the bridal couple much more than the other speakers did. After explaining that there is a basic division of labor between husband and wife that they should keep in mind, at the same time as they should be willing to transcend this division whenever required, he declared that there are above all three "authorities" or "lords" (*tuhan*), which they need to obey in their lives: relatives, government, and God.[1] He pronounced the words slowly for effect, as if to convey an impression of the importance of these authorities. Having made this statement, he then went on to compare these three categories, noting, among other things, that the government and God are not always present, and thus cannot be taken into consideration as much as relatives, but that, on the other hand, relatives, like the government, cannot always observe what one is doing, whereas God sees everything.

It was particularly this statement — about the three principal authorities to be obeyed — which upon recollection some six months after fieldwork, gave me the idea to treat authority as the principal subject of my thesis. It initially did so for the particular reason

[1] In enumerating the three authorities, Ma Putup used the Indonesian words *pemerintah* and *tuhan* for government and God, respectively. For what I have glossed as relatives, he did not use any single word but gave a standardized list of kinship terms, mentioned in quick succession (*uma, ine, itak, kakah, burok, tuo, ayu, ongan*: see Appendix 1 for kinship terminology). When discussing the importance of "relatives" in his speech he also sometimes more specifically talked about *dali tuha*, "the elders," a category which in some contexts is synonymous with that of the *manti*.

that it enabled me to envision authority as an encompassing theoretical concept under which I could subsume what I then conceived of as the three most promising candidates for a dissertation topic, namely, kinship, politics, and religion. Originally, I had, in fact, set out to make a study of ethnicity, but as it had turned out, I had not been able to collect as much data on this subject as I had desired (a result, principally, of the relative insignificance of ethnic identity and ethnicity as criteria for social action among the Bentian: see Sillander 1995). As I also had collected much more data on some other topics — particularly on kinship, politics, and religion — I realized that a study of ethnicity would fall short of adequately utilizing my fieldwork material, particularly those aspects of it which I had obtained through first-hand, long-term participant observation of everyday life. When I, in addition, was advised, for the very same reasons, against making a study of ethnicity at my institution when returning from fieldwork, I decided on developing another principal topic for my dissertation. This was not to prove so easy, however. In fact, I had been unable to do so — until pondering the significance in this respect of the above-mentioned wedding speech.

Even though kinship, religion, and politics had all emerged as good alternatives for a dissertation topic, I had not been able to choose one over another (in part because of a concern with ethnographic documentation, motivated by the scarcity of previously published information on the Bentian), nor had I found a way to integrate these, as they appeared to me, disparate categories into a coherent and balanced whole. In fact, developing a new theme had become quite a problem for me — which authority now promised to solve. Here was a piece of indigenous discourse which suggested to me that these analytical fields could indeed be integrated, that the analytical division implicated by them had been misleading, maintaining a notion of separation, where there was in fact no empirical justification for such a notion. More importantly, Ma Putup's speech suggested that authority — even though this obviously meant authority in a rather wide sense of the term — is a centrally important issue in Bentian society, in a very wide range of spheres, including those on which I had particularly good data.

As I now perceived it, a prominent aspect of Bentian social life was people's concern with trying to exert influence over each other, and with drawing upon, for this purpose, one or another authority, authoritative principle, or technique of authorization, such as religious ritual, formal speeches, government regulations, tradition, kin responsibilities, or obligations to spirits. Social life in Bentian society — as no doubt in many others — thus to a significant degree related, I understood, to authority. Ma Putup's speech made this evident to me. Doing some library investigations, I subsequently learned that authority in anthropology, and even in the social sciences more generally, had not been very much studied as a topic in its own right — even though allusions to or brief discussions of the concept in the course of investigation of various other subjects are commonplace. At least this was the case with respect to empirical analyses of authority

in the broad sociological sense in which I conceived of the term. There is, as might be expected, a fair number of rather theoretical, philosophical analyses of the concept, or basic nature of, authority, and quite a few sociological and political science studies, including the most famous of all studies of authority, Max Weber's discussion of authority types in his *Economy and Society* (1978[1922]).[2] In anthropology, on the other hand, explicit general treatments of authority are rare (for one example, see Hoebel 1958), and even though ethnographies on the related subject of leadership, or authority systems more generally, abound, I have come across no monograph on the role or constitution of authority in informal social processes outside authority systems.[3] One classic anthropological study explicitly dealing with authority in more than a cursory manner which shares with this study a broad understanding of the concept is Malinowski's *Freedom and Civilization* (1947). Besides political authority, Malinowski also discusses authority in the family, the authority of tradition, and the authority of

[2] Among the best-known theoretical discussions of authority we find the 1958 NOMOS (Yearbook of the American Society for Political and Legal Philosophy) volume *Authority* (1958a) edited by Carl Friedrich which includes papers by Hannah Arendt, Talcott Parsons and E.A. Hoebel, and its successor volume *Authority Revisited* (1987) edited by Roland Pennock and John Chapman including papers by Steven Lukes, Joseph Raz, and William Connolly. Influential monographs on the subject include *The Functions of the Executive* by Chester Barnard (1938), *Tradition and Authority* by Carl Friedrich (1972), *The Authority of Law* by Joseph Raz (1979), *The Practice of Political Authority* by Richard Flathman (1980) and Richard Sennett's *Authority* (1980). Richard De George's *The Nature and Limits of Authority* (1985) provides a general philosophical discussion of the concept which I have found particularly useful for my purposes. In psychology, Stanley Milgram's *Obedience to Authority* (1974) stands out as the most famous study of the subject, although Theodor Adorno's et al. *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950) is of course also an important contribution.

[3] There are, of course, a lot of anthropological studies of leadership and political authority, particularly from Africa. Well-known examples are Evans-Pritchard's *The Nuer* (1940) and Fortes' *The Web of Kinship Ámong the Tallensi* (1949), and their jointly edited *African Political Systems* (1940). Some African studies also deal with authority in a more explicit and direct way, for example, Brown (1961), Gluckmann (1955), Lan (1985), and Middleton (1960). All these African studies deal, however, restrictively or predominantly with political authority (a partial exception is Middleton, who has a special interest in religious authority), in addition to considering complexly organized unilineal societies very different from that of the Bentian. I have therefore found limited value in discussing these references. There are, of course, also some studies of political authority closer to my area of investigation, that is, from Southeast Asia. Particularly well-known and useful for my purposes are those adopting what Errington (1987) refers to as a "centrist perspective," for example, Anderson (1972), Errington (1989), Geertz (1980), Tambiah (1985c), and Wolters (1982). However, to the extent that these Southeast Asian studies deal with authority, they are again mainly concerned with its political aspect, even though religion and kinship notably play a significant role in their analyses as central factors contributing to political authority. This holds true also for Pye's (1985) explicit and comparative work on authority in Asia as a whole, as well as for Jackson's (1980) study of *Traditional Authority, Islam, and Rebellion* in Indonesia, and it also pertains to all those studies of indigenous legal systems which have been conducted in Southeast Asia (e.g. Barton 1919; Dozier 1966; Just 2001; Schlegel 1970). In some relatively recent ethnographies of Southeast Asia (e.g. Atkinson 1989; Bowen 1991; Keane 1997; Kuipers 1990; M. Rosaldo 1980; Rutherford 2003; Tsing 1993) other forms of authority than political authority (e.g. religious, linguistic, oratorical) are also discussed, even though all of these studies (each of which has notably influenced the present one in important ways) have treated authority as just one subject alongside others, not as a principal topic.

magic and religion, and he makes the assertions that authority is functionally indispensable in human society and a precondition for freedom (e.g. see 1947:178,185,233).

Ma Putup's speech also provided a rare local synthesis of what is authoritative in his society, and a rather good one at that. The three categories of authority mentioned in his speech are of great concern in most Bentians' lives. People often feel compelled to observe them, even when they do not for some reason want to, and they frequently do so without conscious consideration of doing so. As his speech also suggested, it is difficult — although not always impossible — to evade them. In this respect they are major *authorities* among the Bentian. People also frequently turn to them for authority, to authorize something which they have done or would like to see done by others. As this indicates, they are major *sources of authority* in Bentian society. Precisely for this reason their importance was often especially evident on such occasions as wedding speeches. Then they were particularly likely to be expressly acknowledged and even celebrated, an indication of the fact that these speeches, together with ritual speeches (given at religious rituals), constitute a major forum for the display and exertion of the authority of the *manti*, who in order to legitimate their own authority are conspicuously apt to invoke these authorities.

In Ma Putup's case, the one authority which he was particularly concerned to invoke was that of God, or more to the point, that of the spirits and the religious experts — of which he was himself a representative — who act as intermediaries in the communication with spirits. It was actually these agencies that he was primarily concerned with here, even though he mainly talked about "God" (I., *tuhan*). When I reflected on the significance of Ma Putup's speech, it was also especially the spirits, or religious authority in general, rather than the Almighty, which "God" signified to me. As I already mentioned, much of Ma Putup's speech actually consisted of a defense of the indigenous Kaharingan religion (in which a supreme God plays almost no part) in the face of government demands of conversion to an officially recognized religion (*agama*). In addition, it also represented an attempt to communicate to the bridal couple and the audience more generally the importance of holding Kaharingan rituals as a means of propitiating the spirits.

Besides providing a local synthesis of what is authoritative in Bentian society, Ma Putup's statement also, as already suggested, gave me an idea of how to integrate data from the fields of kinship, religion, and politics within a single study. Indeed, it suggested to me a very straightforward way in which this could be done: by structuring my study in accordance with his threefold enumeration of authorities. Recognizing the importance of the three authorities mentioned in his speech, and the fact that they corresponded, roughly, to the three analytical fields on which I considered that I had particularly good data, this solution felt so attractive that I have stuck to it. Consequently my analysis of

authority is divided into three principal parts: one on "kinship authority," another on "religious authority," and a third on "political authority." Now, there are of course also some other important authorities — and sources of authority — in Bentian society in addition to those mentioned by Ma Putup. It has been my intention to also study such authorities (in so far as their significance in social processes of authorization merits interest) even though I have, in a sense, done so "through" Ma Putup's authorities in that I have discussed these other authorities within the three parts into which my analysis is divided. Also, as already suggested, it has not been my intention to be true to Ma Putup's classification in a very literal sense, but rather to employ it as a heuristic device enabling me to explore the significance of authority systematically in a wide range of social spheres. This is most obvious in the case of "government," as my category of "political authority" does in fact only partly deal with government authority: to an equal or greater extent the chapter designated by this concept is about the authority of the *manti* and that of customary law. Despite the fact that the past and present significance of the *manti* and *adat* among the Bentian to a very important extent reflects government influence, these two authorities, whose role as authorities in Bentian society is absolutely central, are primarily seen as indigenous institutions — indeed, often as opposing forces with respect to the government — and their authority also largely derives from other, local sources (e.g. from kinship, and the ancestors). Thus, a good case could be made for considering them instead in the other principal parts of the study, and I have indeed found it necessary to do so up to a certain extent. In practice the significance of the various authorities that I discuss is, of course, often overlapping or inseparable, and in the final instance, my categorization of Bentian authority represents only one of many possible approaches and perspectives on the subject. I believe that there are some particularly good grounds for my theoretical understanding of authority, however, and it is to a presentation of this understanding that we shall now turn.

Action, Authorship, and Authorization

Authority, as the word is used in this study, differs significantly from Max Weber's use of the term, even though it relates closely to his concept of action, and that of social action in particular. My interest in authority, as already noted, regards authority particularly as it is articulated with social action and interaction. "Social action" I understand to be, following Weber, action oriented toward other people's behavior or expected behavior (cf. Weber 1978:22-24). Like Weber, I recognize that social action is always associated with a subjective dimension, or a "dimension of meaning." This consideration is of particular significance in respect to such social action which has to do with authority (authoritative or authorizing action), and thereby, in fact, one which may

be taken, as I will demonstrate, to expose certain limitations with Weber's understanding of authority. By "authority" I primarily mean *a capacity to influence or authorize* people's actions or views, or a *source of authority* having the capacity to influence or authorize people's actions or views. It should perhaps be explicitly noted here that I understand such capacities and sources as not restricted to persons, but as also referring to institutions, ideas, and practices. This reflects the fact that it is not so much personalized or institutionalized authority that I am interested in as it is *processes* of authorization; like Friedrich, I perceive that authority is, in fact, a "quality of communication, rather than of persons" (1958b:36, orig. italics omitted). It can also be added that, in addition to authority, I am to some extent concerned with its reverse side, that is, with "autonomy," the capacity of persons to act uninfluenced by others or, in other words, to retain discretion.

My conception of authority is much more encompassing than Weber's, who defines authority (*Herrschaft*) as "the probability that a command with a given specific content will be obeyed by a given group of persons" (1978:53).[4] This difference in perspectives, reflected by his definition, can partly be explained by the fact that I am not, in distinction to him, specifically interested in authority in organizations, or formal *structures* of leadership, but rather with authority in all spheres of social *action*, including informal everyday life.[5] I thus see little reason to restrict my conception of authority to (or model this conception on) conditions pertaining to orders successfully issued. In my understanding of the term, authority can be exerted even without any orders being issued or implied (or analytically imaginable *a posteriori*). Obedience is not a central issue for me, and I am not particularly concerned with what Richard De George (1985:22) calls "executive authority," that is, authority exercised by someone (or an institution) in the capacity of holding a "right or power to act for or on someone else" (which is, however, as De George notes, what most which has been written on authority concerns). My interest in authority also includes what De George (1985:22) calls "non-executive authority," that is, "de facto authority" exerted by or deriving from someone (or

[4] In his *Economy and Society*, and elsewhere, Weber's term *Herrschaft* has been variously translated as domination or authority. Already from his famous above-cited definition of the word (in connection with which it is glossed as "domination" in *Economy and Society,* 1978) it is evident that he is specifically interested in authority *in relations of domination*, and through his development of his famous authority types it becomes further clear that his interest is restricted to what he calls "legitimate domination." By contrast, I am interested in authority *both* within and outside relations of domination, which implies that authority, in my understanding of the word, is not equivalent to, or even necessarily associated with, domination.

[5] Despite taking action as the starting point of sociological analysis, Weber was, in fact, as noted by Alan Dawe (1979:393) mainly concerned with explaining social systems. As Dawe observes, "he never develops it [his 'putative sociology of action'] beyond a few initial concepts because his particular use of these concepts leads him straight to a sociology of social system."

something) not holding such rights or power.[6] For me to talk about authority, it is in fact enough that someone — or something — *influences* someone in his or her actions or views (in so far, it should perhaps be added, as that influence is significant in *authorization* processes, a concept which I will discuss below). In fact, I also consider it relevant to talk about authority in such cases as when a person who influences someone else can be regarded as subordinated to that person. That is, I contend that authority can also be exerted by persons who have rather little authority, generally speaking. In my view, to assume that authority exists only as the property of those who hold some more or less clearly defined authority position, entails a serious simplification of any understanding of the workings of authority. Moreover, doing so would have political implications: such narrow notions of authority are the stuff of ideologies that help reproduce asymmetric social relations.

What I am proposing here is what we could call a more "democratic" authority concept. It is democratic in at least two respects. First, it refers to something which is not limited to certain spheres of the society, or restricted to certain persons or positions, but rather, extendable to all or most fields of interaction and categories of actors. Second, it presupposes the possession of some degree of freedom by all actors involved in or affected by the exertion of authority. The latter point was, of course, also recognized by Weber who distinguished authority from power precisely on the grounds that the former, unlike the latter, requires voluntary submission by the person subjected to authority (cf. Weber 1978:53). It has also been acknowledged or perceived by many others, for example, by Hannah Arendt (1958:83), and by Georg Simmel whose writings on superordination and subordination (e.g. Simmel 1964:181-303) attest to the existence in all relations of domination of some amount of freedom on the part of the subjugated. More recently, the same point has been forcefully expounded by Michel Foucault (1980) who asserts (unlike Weber) that power is preconditioned by the freedom of its subjects — and more effectively exercised the more freedom they have. Within the two last decades, a growing concern in and beyond the field of cultural studies with such topics as "resistance," "margins," and "the subaltern," has been paralleled by an increasing general academic acceptance of (and attraction to) such views that ascribe agency to the weak.[7]

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[6]This is another respect in which my approach to authority differs from Weber's. As Steven Lukes has explained, Weber's concern with authority is restrictively concerned with *de jure* authority, that is, it attempts to explain authority "by reference to a set of rules prevalent in a given society," rather than "by reference to the beliefs and attitudes of those subject to authority" (1979:640). As Lukes (1987:64) has observed, Weber is actually uninterested, unlike me, in the question of "When and why do men obey?" as well as in, we may add, other aspects of what constitutes authority in *practice*.

[7] This is not the place to review the literature on such topics as margins, resistance and the subaltern, which together have led to an immense increase of interest in domination as experienced "from below," as well as to an expansion of notions about what counts as "subordinated agency." Resistance studies

What much of this interest in the subordinated as active agents adds up to is a realization that power does not emanate from the superordinated, but is instead something evolving from the relationship between super- and subordinated. Power, and its sister phenomenon authority, are thus essentially relational in nature and derivation; they are socially constructed in interaction between individuals performing social actions in the Weberian sense. They do not come into being — and they would cease to exist — without such mutually oriented action; they are dependent on the kind of practical recognition of their existence that only such behavior can provide. As a consequence, actors, including authoritative actors, should not be regarded as the authors of their actions in any conclusive or definite sense, any more than authors of literary works should be identified as the ultimate source of their meaning or origination. Authority does not rest with the author, as Roland Barthes has taught us through his influential essay on "The Death of the Author" (1977), and I think it is relevant to apply his argument metaphorically to studies of authority relations in the social sciences.

Authority, as I conceive of it here, is not something fixed. Rather, it moves, and it obtains its energy from its movement; it needs to move to survive. In fact, authority should, in my view, not be seen so much as an entity as it should be regarded as a process — an essentially polymorph process which I will refer to with the general term of "authorization." There are many types of authorization, which is another way of saying that authority moves in many ways. In the first place, we should note that authorization can occur in the direction from the top down, as well as in the direction from the bottom up, i.e. in both ways between the super- and the subordinated. The subordinated typically authorizes the superordinated by obeying him or by becoming influenced by him. But it also frequently happens that the superordinated authorizes the subordinated, by delegating part of his authority to him. In fact, the second type of authorization is often a practical precondition of the first; without it the subordinated would often be hard pressed or altogether unwilling to submit to the superordinated's authority. What is more fundamental to note here, however, is that both super- and subordinated frequently need the other to gain authority through authorization: the superordinated needs the subordinated's recognition of his authority to have it, and the subordinated needs the

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perhaps most notably include James Scott's (1985, 1990) analyses of peasant everyday resistance, and the works on youth and working class culture by the so-called Birmingham school of cultural studies (e.g. Hall and Jefferson 1976; Willis 1977). In anthropology, the monographs of Comaroff (1985) and Ong (1987) can be pointed out as influential examples of studies more directly concerned with the topic. The term "subaltern" is most famously associated with Gayatri Spivak (1988a, 1988b) and other Indian scholars associated with the subaltern studies school of history (e.g. Guha 1983, 1988). The words "margins" and "marginality" have been of special concern in a predominantly American cultural studies debate engaged in particular with such topics as ethnicity, postcolonialism, and gender (e.g. Bhabha 1990; Ferguson 1990; Ginzburg & Tsing 1990). In anthropology, Anna Tsing's (1993, 1994) work on national integration and identity negotiation among the Meratus Dayaks of south Borneo (to which I will have reason to make frequent further reference) is one of the better known localized analyses of the experience and conditions of "speaking from the margins."

superordinated to have his authority in order to employ it. Authority thus in both instances presupposes transfer of authority: no movement, no authority.

At the same time, as authority presupposes mutual dependency between the super- and the subordinated, it also presupposes their inequality. So as not to collapse the categories of super- and subordinated, and succumb to reductionism, we have to recognize that authority, at least in so far as we are concerned with "embodied" or "personalized" authority, presupposes hierarchy. Like movement, hierarchy can be seen as built into such authority. Without hierarchy there would be no authoritative persons; the superordinated's authority derives precisely from that difference which distinguishes the superordinated from the subordinated, or in other words, from that which the former possesses, but the latter lacks. Not all interpersonal differences constitute sources of authority, however. In fact, only that which counts as intersubjectively valuable or extraordinary (i.e. as a scarce resource), and which thus has a "suprapersonal legitimacy" has the capacity of functioning as a source of authorization.[8] However, in so far as something has such a suprapersonal legitimacy, it can also be used by the subordinated against the superordinated.

As already pointed out, I consider it relevant to talk about authority also in such instances as when a subordinate influences a superordinate. Authority, in my view, is far from the exclusive prerogative of the authoritative, and it can occasionally be used to unauthorize the authoritative, so to speak, i.e. in such situations when the balance of authority shifts. Less dramatically, a subordinate can also employ authority in order to influence a superordinate without challenging the latter's authority. He can, for instance, draw on a different source of authority than that from which the latter's authority derives. In many societies and situations there is often a very thin line between superordinated and subordinated, and much exertion or employment of authority does of course occur between people who for most purposes regard themselves as equals. It is also largely (although not exclusively) on such authorization that the present study will focus, as the people studied can be regarded as comparatively egalitarian (and often regard themselves as such). However, as we already know, they do have some weakly developed authority positions (e.g. *manti*, and a couple of categories of religious experts), and I will naturally pay some attention to these, in so far as the importance of their roles in authorization processes merits interest.

Before going any further, I will now present a third, and centrally important sense in which I will employ the term authorization. It is partly because of this type of authorization that I consider it appropriate to deal specifically with authority, rather than,

[8] For this point I am indirectly indebted to Georg Simmel (1964:184) who says of authority that it "stems from the objectivity of norms and forces," and who distinguishes prestige from authority on the basis that prestige, in contrast to authority, "lacks the element of super-subjective significance... [and] the identity of the personality with an objective power or norm."

for instance, with power, in this study. Authorization in this sense is not something which occurs between persons, but rather a process initiated — in the last instance, at least — by the same person who is influenced by it. The term here refers to the process whereby someone draws on a source of authority — whether that source is an authoritative person or, more commonly, an authoritative institution, principle or value — so as to influence — that is, to enable or legitimize — his own actions. A large part of my attention to authority in this dissertation will regard authorization in this respect, which may well be a process of central importance in social life in every human society, and which should not, in my view, be disregarded in any study of authority, since it does not occur independently from other forms of authorization (for instance, it draws on, and hence adds to the importance of, sources which are available also for other forms of authorization). I say "of central importance in *social* life" because similar, "other-oriented" considerations pertain to such "self-authorization" as to those processes whereby someone influences other people: the actions involved in both types of authorization are social actions in the Weberian sense. Moreover, frames and models for interpretation and evaluation of such actions are in both cases socially constructed within moral communities (which is not to say, however, that the latter are ever entirely undifferentiated or perfectly consolidated). Authorization of all types (including self-authorization) is thus intimately bound up with social life in some very fundamental ways.

My interest in authority as a broadly encompassing concept relating to both self-authorization and instances when one influences someone else ("other-authorization"), should basically be seen as an interest in those factors in society that influence people's actions. My basic concerns are very much with agency and its socio-cultural determinants, and it is against the background of these concerns that my interest in authority should be primarily understood , that is, as an interest in how authority affects agency, or as an interest in the role played by authority in the process referred to by Berger and Luckmann (1967) as "internalization." This is another reason why I have a particular interest in self-authorization, and why authority interests me especially as "sources of authorization," rather than as authority in the more restricted sense of embodied or personalized authority. A general study of how authority affects agency cannot be restricted to the authority deriving from authority positions; indeed, it cannot even be restricted to how people *exert* authority, not even if it would then extend its interest to those who hold no special authority. It has to study the whole range of sources of authority available in the society — including authoritative values, institutions and practices — and it has to investigate, not only how people use authority *over* each other, but also how authority is employed — including unintentionally or unconsciously — for the *legitimation* and *motivation* of action and values.

Free-floating, Objectified and Socially Mediated Authority

What I attempt to do in this study, then, can be described as an attempt to investigate all the uses that Bentians commonly make of important sources of authority available in their society. And as this implies, I will be centrally concerned with the *sources* of authority upon which they commonly draw. I will also be very much concerned with the *sorts* of authority that they use when drawing upon them, or *how* they, generally and variously, employ authority, as well as with how authority is *manifested* and *construed* in social action and interaction, or to put it concisely, with how authority is articulated with social life.

In any society, there is, of course, a multitude of sorts — as well as sources — of authority. Even in a small-scale society such as that of the Bentian, the complexity of authority is remarkable in this respect. Partly for this reason, I have found limited general value in Weber's authority types for making sense of Bentian authority, even though they have, as we shall see, proved valuable in many specific contexts. Another reason for this is that the authority which Bentians frequently use in everyday life largely conforms to an authority type that can be seen to have been left out from his classification. We can call this authority type "value-rational authority" as the actions to which it pertains are "value-rational" in Weber's sense, that is, they are associated — tacitly, for the most part — with certain basic values, beliefs or assumptions, which make them appear as purposeful in themselves (cf. Weber 1978:24-26). Again, the limited value of Weber's categories of authority for my purposes has to do with the fact that the field of application for which he primarily constructed these ideal types differs from that in which I will apply my concept of authority. Weber was primarily interested in the types of legitimacy by which *authority systems* — that is, institutions exerting institutionalized forms of authority, such as states, armies and political organizations — can secure their authority (his authority interest was thus, as De George, 1985:284, has noted, restricted to executive authority). Weber noted that neither habit or material interest, nor affectual or value-rational motives on the part of the members of such systems, are enough in themselves, or in combination, to provide a solid ground for the authority of such systems. In addition, he argued, all authority systems also need to establish their authority on some basic conception of their *legitimacy* (or on some combination of such conceptions), and he identified "legal," "traditional," and "charismatic" authority as the three possible forms of (pure) legitimate authority, which vary in their qualities according to the basic principle (legality, tradition or charisma) through which they and their leaders maintain their right to exert authority (cf. Weber 1978:212-15).

In contrast to Weber, my interest in authority concerns the motives of individuals rather than the legitimacy of systems. This is, of course, partly the result of choice, but also the consequence of the fact that my ethnographic data only marginally include

institutionalized authority of the sort investigated by Weber. Authority among the rather egalitarian and loosely organized Bentian is generally "free-floating" in that it is in large part not institutionalized in authority systems or positions and frequently not even personalized. Much of it is neither particularly "objectified," in the sense of being very fixed or reified conceptually, or self-consciously identified and employed "as authority." However, even free-floating authority derives from sources which have a suprapersonal legitimacy, which implies that such authority (like authority in general) presupposes the existence of at least some *conceptual* hierarchies (i.e. some value-systems), even though not always of some political or social ones. I will also be much concerned with sources of authority in this study, which means that I will be dealing with some at least weakly objectified authorities, since culturally constructed and intersubjectively perceived sources of authority must have at least some degree of conceptual fixity. Some of the more influential of these sources, moreover, such as customary law, the government, and the *manti*, are those which are the most objectified, which points to the general fact that the capacity of authority to authorize, is positively associated with the degree to which it is objectified. In other words, even though authority can be rather free-floating in terms of institutionalization and personalization, effective authorization frequently involves some degree of (either preceding or concurrent) objectification.[9]

Besides often involving objectification, effective authorization also — even when we are speaking about relatively free-floating authority — tends to require some access to what we could call "social resources." This is another sense in which we can speak of authority as profoundly social or intimately articulated with social life. I have already argued that authority is social in that it presupposes socially constituted conceptual hierarchies, in that the actions involved in all types of authorization are social actions, as well as in that exertion or "possession" of authority requires social recognition. In addition, there is reason to regard authority as social also because effective authorization tends to demand the actor's adequate maintenance of some number of social relations, or his or her embeddedness in some particular social networks. In other words, authorization tends to demand some amount of "social capital" in Pierre Bourdieu's

[9] The term "objectification" holds an important position in Western philosophy, most famously, in the works of Hegel, Marx and Lukacs. I am here using the word in a more or less similar manner to how Roger Keesing (1982) talks about "objectified culture." In distinction from him, I am, of course, talking about objectified authority, not culture, but in so far as that authority is culture, as it is in the case of "tradition" (*adat*) or kinship ideology, my usage differs little from his. To further clarify my usage, it can be noted that I see objectified authority as such authority which is clearly recognized as authority, or to some degree reified, that is, conceived in a fairly invariable and bounded way. Unobjectified authority, on the other hand, is not reified, and for the most part not consciously employed as authority. We can make a further distinction here between objectified authority and objectified use of authority. "Objectified usage" primarily refers to such use of authority which is accompanied by at least some degree of consciousness with respect to the activity's status as being about or involving employment of authority, whereas "objectified authority" refers to an authority or source of authority consciously perceived as authoritative or authorizing.

(1986) terms. This is perhaps especially evident among such residentially dispersed swidden cultivators as the Bentian, for whom Anthony Reid's (1983:8) characterization of "control of men" (rather than land) as the "key to Southeast Asian social systems," is particularly appropriate. But authorization presupposes social capital also for other reasons than those for which leaders need followers, or for which any Bentian occasionally (at times of household rituals, for instance) needs some concentration of kin and neighbors. Authorization presupposes social capital also because the availability of authority is socially mediated. Actors are often most evidently connected with and dependent on other actors in that they need their concrete presence (or mediating influence) in order to obtain authority. Access to sources of authority and acquisition of authoritative use of authority is more or less exclusively gained through other people — through their information, guidance, and models. Without the mediation of authority through other people, many aspects of authority would simply be absent from the actor's world, or at least much less relevant in it.

Even if authority may be seen as ultimately deriving from conceptual hierarchies or the more or less extensively shared values which make up such hierarchies, authority does not, if we look at it from the actor's point of view, stem only from values or other immaterial sources, but also from various sources in the material world, including, among other things, ancestral objects, items of wealth, and authoritative persons. In practice, sources of authority are frequently material, and even ideational sources of authority are commonly associated with particular people or objects, and must in fact often be so, in order to have some practical significance. To be truly persuasive, ideas and values tend to have to be associated with some concrete material manifestations in the actor's life-world. Otherwise their salience in the recurrent bodily-spatial and interactional practices which make up much of the actor's everyday life is much more uncertain, as well as more contingent on contextual factors and active implemental efforts. Consequently, their incorporation as influential elements into the actor's "habitus" is also much less likely, as their ontological depth and degree of taken-for-grantedness largely depends on the extent to which they are bound up with these practices. To use another term of Bourdieu's, without such socio-material mediation they are much less likely to become "doxa," that is, part of "what goes without saying and what cannot be said [i.e. contested]" (Bourdieu 1977:170).

Like Bourdieu (1977, 1990) I believe that everyday practices are central in inculcating the actor's sense of the world, and that these practices are governed by a logic of their own — a practical logic — which is not reducible to principles of formal logic, and normally not guided by instrumental reason in any strict sense of the term (in so far as they are, they more often conform to "tactics" rather than "strategics," in de Certeau's [1984:35-37] terms). Following Bourdieu, I also regard the word "sense" as well-designed to describe the dominant mode of the actor's orientation to social life. This

process is not as much premeditated and consciously organized as it is taken for granted and structured by so called common-sense; it is characterized by what phenomenologists, perhaps somewhat naively, call "the natural attitude to the world." As part of my vocabulary might already have suggested (e.g. life-world, bodily-spatial, everyday life), the approach to authority taken in this study also owes much to phenomenology (e.g. Merleau-Ponty 1962, 1968; Schutz 1962, 1970) and phenomenological or practice-oriented anthropology (e.g. Bell 1992; Jackson 1996; Ortner 1984). This study is life-world centered in that it focuses on everyday experiences and embodied, concretely situated interactional practices, particularly those classifiable as "working," as Schutz (1970:126) understands this term.[10] The setting for and object of the analysis is local or localized social life as observable on the spot, in its spatio-temporal immediacy. My approach is processual rather than structural. It is also decidedly micro rather than macro oriented, if reference to this practically untenable distinction is allowed. This is to say, I am interested in "structural factors" only in so far that these are demonstrably *present* in the life-world. By "present" I here primarily mean *influential*, either as resources or constraints (objective or imagined), in processes of action and experience. The kind of structural factors that I will be most concerned with are the fundamental values and assumptions, on the one hand, and the socio-material preconditions, on the other, which are bound up with everyday practices. My understanding of structure thus resembles that of Giddens (1984), who understands this concept to mean mobile "rules and resources" that exist only as implicated in agency (or what he calls the "structuration process"), for example, as "memory traces" or as "instantiated in action" (1984:337). Structure in the sense of what he calls "system," on the other hand, a concept which corresponds to "structure" in the more conventional, macro-level oriented, sociological understanding of the term — Giddens defines system as "the patterning of social relations across time-space" (1984:337) — will be of less concern in my study, although I will make some particular references to structural factors in this sense in Chapter 5, with the objective of showing how Bentian political authority has been influenced by external influences. The Bentian's position within the larger region of which they are part — particularly their condition of marginality — has had a crucial importance for Bentian political authority. However, for the most part, the approach of this study is action-oriented, and I believe this to be an advantage over most authority studies which have tended to be concerned

[10] Schutz (1970:126) defines "working" as "action in the outer world, based upon a project, and characterized by the intention to bring about the projected state of affairs by bodily movements." It may be relevant to note here that Schutz conceived of working as central to "the constitution of the reality of daily life" (1970:126), and that he applied the concept above all for routine actions, which he generally considered as reasonable (and meaningful) but not as rational in a strict sense, in the respect that one could speak of isolated rational acts, for instance. When I say that I am concerned with such interactional practices classifiable as working, I mean to convey that the objects of my interest are embodied and worldly interactional routine actions, that is, "things that people regularly do to (or with) each other."

primarily with the structure (in a more conventional sense) of authority systems. As it seems to me, my approach illuminates different things than a structural approach would, and enables for this reason a new perspective on authority.

Another frame of reference which has contributed to the development of the approach of this study, especially to its preoccupation with social action, is the corpus of theory known as "actor-network theory" or "the sociology of translation" (e.g. Law 1986, 1991). I am influenced, in particular, by actor-network theory's concept of power, but I also share the theory's basic view of the processual constitution of social phenomena, including its insistence on treating social phenomena as effects rather than causes of action. We cannot assume the pre-existence of social phenomena (e.g. power, capital, roles, culture), or what Bruno Latour, with reference to power, has called its existence "*in potentia*" (1986:264). We cannot treat such variables as explanatory or given, as providing their own force, so to speak, but must instead see how their appropriation by actors in society — which always involves "translation" — creates their importance and energy. The reason that there is power in society is not that there is someone holding power — in fact, as Latour, echoing Foucault, points out, one cannot really hold power: it exists only when one exerts it, and even then one does not actually have it, as it is others that are doing the job (1986:264-65). Just as authority cannot be said to rest with the author, power cannot accurately be understood as the property (in either of the word's two meanings) of the powerful. Power does not simply emanate from the powerful — that is, spread on its own account or by a force of its own, according to what Latour (1986:264-65) calls a "model of diffusion" — and it is not simply transmitted (or alternatively resisted) by those who submit to it, execute it or otherwise are affected by it. Rather, power — and the same goes for authority — comes into being *because* it is appropriated by actors, and in this process it is always translated, as the actors who appropriate it do so for reasons and motives of their own. The continuous translation of power in "actor-networks" is what fuels its extension in society (i.e. what actors do with power is what provides it with its energy), and it is the size and control of such networks which determine its scope.

The concept of actor-network is important here also because it points to the significance of what I above referred to as "socio-material mediation." I consider especially relevant the term "intermediaries" which Michel Callon (1986, 1991) uses to refer to the constituents of such networks. Intermediaries are the people and objects through which an actor's influence (the effects of his actions) is translated, that is, moderated and extended. Actor-network theory is, as is well-known, concerned with abolishing the distinction between human and non-human factors in sociological analysis — as epitomized in Callon's concept of "free association" (1986:200-01) — and with emphasizing the importance of material (e.g. technological) influences on interaction. Without sharing actor-network theory's sometimes more specific commitment to a study

of non-human intermediaries, I subscribe to its view of the constitutive importance of "networking" (to devise a concept fusing Schutz with Latour) in the broader material sense, that is, including people. My notion of mediation or "intermediation" may in fact be seen as primarily related to *social* association, although the word "social," as used in this connection (and throughout this study), has strong connotations of corporeality, spatiality, and worldliness. In its concern with an originally social or intersubjective materiality, conjoining body and world, the concept of "flesh" (*la chair*) of the later Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1968), comes, in a sense, very close to my understanding of "the social." Merleau-Ponty's, Bourdieu's and Foucault's notions of the body have also all influenced my materially oriented understanding of sociality (and by way of extension, of authority), as has (with respect to another aspect of that sociality) Michel de Certeau's (1984, 1986) thoughts about the spatial constitution of practices. Even though "body" and "space" are not important concepts in this study, the understanding of social action that these approaches to these phenomena imply shares something significant with mine, as does that of actor-network theory, and certain already mentioned proponents of practice theory and phenomenology. This is an interest in the most immediate practical and material contexts and conditions of action, and an assumption that these factors are central in the constitution of agency. What this means is that my understanding of social action is not restricted to the idealistic perspective or ideational approach commonly associated with Weber, even though values and the meaning-dimension of social action will, as already pointed out, occupy central positions in my analysis of authority. My understanding of how ideational factors affect Bentians is also informed by the above-mentioned influences in that I regard the recurrent socio-material mediation of ideational factors as what above all makes for their importance. An important example of such mediation is notably "discourse circulation" (i.e. the social transmission of public representations), a phenomenon which, as Greg Urban (1996) has convincingly argued, in itself bridges the ideational and the material spheres, or "the intelligible" and "the sensible," an observation which suggests that it may not be very wise to think of these two categories as antithetical in the first place.

Power, Politics and Ethnographic Authority

In discussing actor-network theory's influence upon my theoretical approach, I discussed at some length some of the theory's ideas about power because of their relevance for my understanding of authority. Thus far, I have not made an attempt to distinguish the concept of authority from that of power. Much of what I have said applies, in fact, to power as much as to authority. This need not be a problem, however, as the distinction between them will not be of any special concern in this study, and I will not deal much

with power as opposed to or distinct from authority. It may be useful here, however, for purposes of clarification, to say a few words about the relative importance and internal relationship of power and authority in the society investigated.

Power is not a given in Bentian society. As is common among non-centralized swidden cultivators in Southeast Asia, there is in Bentian society rather little institutionalized and absolute power. Power, in the sense of an ability to impose one's will over someone despite resistance, is only rarely available to Bentians, including those who hold the positions as *manti* or *belian*. Consequently, power has to be established anew in situations and relations when it emerges. Typically, in order for it to come into being, the element of authority is required. In other words, if one is to successfully exercise power, the attempt to do so usually has to be authorized either through explicit reference to a source of authority, or by the attempt being in some respect implicitly authoritative. Thus, power and authority are frequently associated, a fact which makes for the central importance of authority in Bentian social life and which makes Bentian society an appropriate setting for a study of authority by making authorization processes salient and observable.

Authority is not always associated with power, however. The invocation of authority is not restricted to those situations in which power is exercised, or to other situations in which attempts are made to influence the actions or views of other people. Authority does not only pertain to politics, narrowly or broadly defined, but also to what could be called the existential domain. This holds true particularly in respect to authority invoked in processes of self-authorization which frequently serves the purpose of establishing existential control or guidance — and of enabling agency — particularly in response to crisis or uncertainty (obtaining "trust," or "ontological security," may be, as Giddens [1991:194-96] has suggested, an important general function of authority, which illuminates different attitudes toward authority in different societies). As Roger Keesing has argued in respect to the Polynesian concept of *mana* — which in certain usages means precisely "authority" (see e.g. Keesing 1984:143-47) — a basic concern which Bentian authority addresses is "the essential unpredictability of human effort"(1984:148). The broad conception of authority, and the generally wide field of inquiry of this study in part reflects an attempt to incorporate authority used within a so called existential domain, and so arrive at a less restrictively political understanding of authority.

There are thus many concerns motivating the approach of this study, some theoretical, some empirical. In addition to those so far discussed, at least one more theoretical incentive should be mentioned. This incentive relates to the so called "crisis of representation" within the discipline of anthropology, and the question of ethnographic authority as addressed by James Clifford (1988). Like Clifford, I recognize a need to reduce the "monological authority" of the author-anthropologist, and I understand a wide field of inquiry as potentially contributing to such a reduction.

It is my contention that the trend of narrowing down subject fields in anthropology is not all for the good, and that the corollary trend of a shift of emphasis from ethnographic documentation toward theoretical discussion does not always yield results of greater native as opposed to academic interest. Whether it does so or not is admittedly difficult to determine, and it is, of course, perfectly possible for emphases of both kinds to yield desirable results in this respect. The answer to the question is perhaps best determined by the individual case at hand. In the case of this study, not writing a more restrictively focused dissertation entails a closer correspondence between the subject of my study, on the one hand, and my (analytically broad) field experience, on the other. In addition, a rather broad topical focus, as well as a comparatively strong emphasis on ethnographic documentation are, as already noted, motivated by the fact that previous (ethnographic and other) data on the people studied are scarce. My concerns would probably have been different if the object of study would have been, for instance, the Iban, Borneo's most famous Dayak group, about whom by now there exists an extensive ethnographic literature, including some thirty or more dissertations. The division of the present study into three principal analytical chapters mirroring the three principal authorities mentioned in the wedding speech, may also be seen as reflecting my concerns in this respect, at the same time as it is motivated, in part, by the possibility of reducing authorial authority through what Clifford (1988:45) calls "directed writing,"[11] that is, through a focus on issues brought forward inductively, by native concerns.

Outline of the Study

The study is divided into six chapters, including an introduction, and a conclusion. Chapter 2 consists of a general ethnographic description of the Bentian while Chapters 3, 4, and 5 provide the principal analytical chapters.

Chapter 2 is quite detailed, for the reason that the Bentian and related groups have been little documented. The general reader may choose to pass over part of the chapter (i.e. the discussion of Luangan identity and subgroups, parts of the historical description of Southeast Bornean regions, and the presentation of Bentian subsistence patterns). However, a large proportion of the chapter has some bearing on my analysis of authority. In particular, it provides information on the contexts in which kinship and government authority function. The chapter begins by an introductory discussion of who the Bentian are and where they live. It then turns to a discussion of the evolution of Bentian identity over time and the nature of ethnic identification among them. This is followed by a

[11] Clifford (1988:45) uses the concept "directed writing" in referring to how Renato Rosaldo (who set out to do a synchronic study of Ilongot social structure) ended up writing a monograph on Ilongot history as a result of having had to listen to endless narratives of local history in the field.

presentation of the Luangan, a concept which designates a large number of loosely connected but culturally and linguistically related subgroups including the Bentian and their neighbors. As most Luangan subgroups have not formed the subject of anthropological study or description in English, I give a brief presentation of them as well as describe what it is that these groups share in ethnic, cultural and linguistic terms. Giving an account of the Luangan is also part of an effort to describe the regional setting of the Bentian, designed to provide an understanding of the articulation of Bentian society with the larger world. I then turn to a presentation of Bentian history. Since little historical information is available on the Bentian I attempt to provide an understanding of their history by adding together relevant information available on the larger region of which they are part (Southeast Borneo), which itself has been rather poorly described. This historical description is particularly concerned with discussing the impact on the Bentian of the different governments which, from early times up until the present, have claimed authority in the region, and thereby significantly affected Bentian notions of authority, particularly of political authority. I then turn to a discussion of the Bentian in a more restrictively local setting, more precisely, to a description of Bentian subsistence and residence and settlement patterns. This section primarily serves to familiarize the reader with the Bentian's local milieu and their general way of life, but it also (especially the latter part on residence and settlement) provides an outline of their social organization, thus offering essential information for the analytical chapters, especially the one on kinship authority.

The three analytical chapters of this study (Chapters 3, 4, and 5) are based on the threefold categorization of authorities discussed at the beginning of this introduction. Chapter 3 considers "kinship authority," a category which I define as "authority relevant in and accruing from kinship relations." Much of this chapter consists of the presentation and analysis of an extended case study recounting the story of a young man who married into the village which constituted my fieldwork base. The particular aim of the analysis, and of the chapter as a whole, is to explore the strategical use of kinship ideology in processes of authorization, but also to examine how kinship more generally authoritatively affects people's actions and life courses. Kinship ideology is a fundamentally important local ideology governing the understanding and organization of interpersonal relations. Chapter 3 is not only about kinship in a strict sense, however, but it also contains some discussion of other forms of ideology regulating local interpersonal relations, including such generally applicable principles or ideals as reciprocity, sharing, respect, and autonomy. My understanding of kinship is broad, in line with similarly broad Bentian conceptions of relatedness.

Chapter 4 deals with religious authority, a category that I define as "authority pertaining to or deriving from relations with so called supernatural agencies." As this definition indicates, the chapter is not only or primarily concerned with so called

supernatural agencies, a concept under which I subsume various kinds of spirits, souls and the ancestors, but with all forms of authoritative influence deriving from them, directly or indirectly. Religious authority is exercised primarily by religious experts but it is frequently employed or invoked also by ordinary people, for instance, when they arrange rituals. The sources of religious authority consist, in addition to agencies, of various notions, objects, and practices (especially rituals) which in one way or another are associated with them. The aim of the chapter is to give an overview of all these sources of religious authority as well as to examine how authority deriving from them is constituted, employed and experienced. However, I will give principal attention to a particular source of authority, namely, ritual, through which I will investigate all other sources of religious authority, an approach motivated by my "action orientation," and the fact that it is principally in and through ritual that these sources are invoked and become effective in Bentian society.

Chapter 5 considers "political authority," a category which I define as "authority exercised by or deriving from encompassing institutions concerned with the organization of supra-family concerns," or as "secular authority deriving from beyond the sphere of kinship." This is a category which I conceive of as consisting principally of three interconnected authorities/sources of authority: the *manti*, *adat* (customary law), and the government, which together make up what I have labeled the "trinity of political authority." A major objective of Chapter 5 is to analyze how the importance of *manti*, *adat*, and government authority have varied during the course of history, in connection with a process of generally increasing local and regional (and lately also national) integration. A consistent topic in the chapter is the articulation of "external authority" with "internal authority." The *manti* and *adat* form interesting case studies in this respect, deriving their authority from both local and "foreign" sources. The problem of marginality in relation to national and regional centers of the postcolonial state forms a special subject of inquiry related to this topic, one which is important, among other things, because it amounts to a stigma of "primitiveness" which profoundly affects the Bentian's identity and relations with others.

Description of Fieldwork

The fieldwork on which this study is based was conducted in two stages, from July through December 1993, and between February 1996 and February 1997. My use of the ethnographic present in this study primarily refers to the latter of these periods. Both periods of fieldwork were carried out under the auspices of the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) and Universitas Indonesia (Jakarta), in co-operation with my partner Isabell Herrmans, like myself a student of anthropology at the University of Helsinki.

Most of the fieldwork was done among Bentians in the subdistrict (*kecamatan*) of Bentian Besar of present-day West Kutai district (*kabupaten*) in the province of East Kalimantan. A total time of about two months was spent among Bentians and other Luangan groups in adjacent subdistricts of East and Central Kalimantan, more precisely, those of Muara Pahu and Muara Lawa in West Kutai district, East Kalimantan, and those of Gunung Purei and Teweh Timur in Barito Utara district, Central Kalimantan. A brief visit to the fieldwork area was made also in August 1998 in connection with participation in a conference in Palangkaraya, the capital of Central Kalimantan. Palangkaraya was also visited in 1993 and 1996 for the purpose of investigating the administration of the Hindu Kaharingan religion. I also spent some time in Samarinda, the capital of East Kalimantan, and in Tenggarong, the capital of the Sultanate of Kutai, in order, among other things, to investigate the Bentian's downriver connections. In July 1994 I visited Leiden for purposes of archival research.

The fieldwork carried out in 1993 was characterized by a regional approach (motivated, in part, by my interest in ethnicity at that time). We stayed for shorter periods in some fifteen villages in the above-mentioned districts, and no longer than a month in any of them. During the 1996 fieldwork, on the other hand, we stayed for most of the time in a small village of only some seventy inhabitants, accessible only by foot. There we lived in a traditional unpartitioned *lou* (small longhouse), incorporated into the household of the house owner, and in close proximity to several other local families who moved in and out of the house, in between staying in their farmhouses. Almost all of our research was conducted through participant observation and unstructured interviews without the assistance of professional assistants. A substantial part of it consisted of observation of, or took place during, ritual: more than one night in three involved participation in rituals. Kaharingan ritual was notably also what had induced us to make an anthropological study in south Borneo in the first place, and our interest in it significantly shaped the character of our fieldwork also in some other important respects. The desire to carry out fieldwork arose during a holiday trip to Kalimantan in 1991, during which witnessing a Kaharingan curing ritual was a particularly influential experience, and it was subsequently significantly fortified by the reading of Joseph Weinstock's article "Kaharingan: Life and Death in Southern Borneo" in Kipp's and Rodgers' *Indonesian Religions in Transition* (1987). In 1992, when we made a one-month trip to the upper Barito, Teweh and Bentian areas in order to identify a fieldwork site, it was again the frequent ritual activity that we learned that characterized some Luangans which occasioned us to settle for them rather than for the Ot Danum subgroups that we also visited during the same trip. Finally, it was our interest in Kaharingan ritual, and particularly that of Isabell who had made this the subject of her research, which caused us to do most of our fieldwork in non-Christian Bentian villages.

Rituals and beliefs were notably also subjects which our informants were comparatively comfortable with, while many other subjects were perceived as sensitive and only reluctantly talked about. A general disinclination to address sensitive (and self-evident) topics in discourse and straightforwardly answer questions, combined with a general social wariness and uneasiness, were, in our experience, conspicuous features of local life which much contributed to our tendency to rely on participant observation rather than any more formal methods. Information often simply had to be deduced from practice. However, it seems that this was also to a remarkable extent how locals went about learning things (including things religious such as cosmology) or were affected by what happened in society. Much of what took place was not mediated by discourse (at least not public discourse), and in many situations and areas of life no explicit or explicable rules or script seemed to guide action. Rather, it seemed to us, things "just happened," or were brought about in some unscheduled way by the procession of events. A principal experience — perhaps *the* principal experience — of our fieldwork was thus that practice was important, both in the sense of determining the outcome of social life, and as a source of information for the interpretation of social life — and this experience has influenced my practice or action approach in this study as much as any prior or later theoretical persuasions. On the other hand, also during our fieldwork there occurred fairly frequent and rather conspicuous attempts to regulate this social "irregularity," often by rather structured means. It was here, as I later came to see it, that authority came into the picture (and Bentian *society* became visible). For example, it was frequently as an aspect of such attempts that kinship, ritual, and the government (or formal speeches), were invoked. Thus, the importance of the sources of authority mentioned by Ma Putup in his wedding speech was also brought home to us by practice, which was a principal reason why his speech appealed to me so much.

The fact that we mainly did fieldwork in Kaharingan communities has also affected the representativeness of this study. The results apply primarily to upriver (Lawa) Bentian communities, and particularly for the Kaharingan population in them, and they do not in their entirety apply to all of the population in some downriver, predominantly Christian communities where I have spent little time, and where lifestyles and value-orientations seem to have changed significantly during the course of the last few decades. Stephanie Fried's (1995, 2003) account of the attempts by educated "Bentian authors" to defend Bentian land rights, which is based on fieldwork in these communities, notably gives a very different picture of *the* Bentian than this ethnography. Nevertheless, I do sometimes talk about *the* Bentian in this study, and when I do so, I have usually meant to indicate that the results are valid for all or most Bentians (although in some cases, which should be apparent from the context, I refer more specifically to the upriver or non-Christian Bentians). When I talk about Bentians, on the other hand, in the indefinite plural form, I do so in order to indicate that my information is, or may only be, valid for part of the

Bentian. Frequently, I have abstained from talking about *the* Bentian, precisely in order not to suggest a false generality of the observations discussed. An important lesson of the "regional approach" which characterized much of my fieldwork was that one should be careful in generalizing. Another benefit of this approach was that it enabled me to meet a lot of people representing other Luangans than Bentians, thus providing me with an opportunity to obtain valuable information on which I have largely relied in my presentation of Luangan subgroups in Chapter 2.

Where Indonesian terms appear, they are indicated with **I.** I have adopted standard (modern) Indonesian spelling for Bentian words. One exception from this rule is that I use double vowels to indicate long vowels (as in *laang*, "forest"). It should be noted that I do not, with the exception of certain place and group names, indicate glottal stops, which are profusely indicated in the unstandardized local writing (generally as *q,* sometimes as *k*). I also do not distinguish between *e* as in English *met* and and *e* as in English *merge* but render both sounds as *e*. My intention has been to give a comparatively simple transcription of Bentian words and not indicate specific features where not semantically significant.

2. The Bentian in an Ethnographic, Regional and Historical Context

In this chapter I will present a general ethnographic account of the Bentian. I will also briefly present the Bentian's neighbors, who, like most Bentians, recognize themselves as belonging to the Luangan, a term designating a category of peoples who like the Bentian have previously been poorly described.[12] Having provided a presentation of the Bentian and the Luangan, I then give an overview of regional history from early times up until today, the aim of which is to place the Bentian in a larger, regional context, and to describe the influence on them of precolonial, colonial and postcolonial governments. After this historical overview I turn to a discussion of the Bentian's local milieu, more precisely, to a description of their subsistence and settlement patterns. A principal aim of this discussion is to provide an outline of Bentian social organization and its physical foundations. Throughout the chapter I will give special attention to history and geography. An underlying objective of the chapter is to demonstrate the importance of history and geography for an understanding of authority among the Bentian, and to point to their inseparability in a Bornean context, to the fact that the one cannot be accounted for without consideration of the other.

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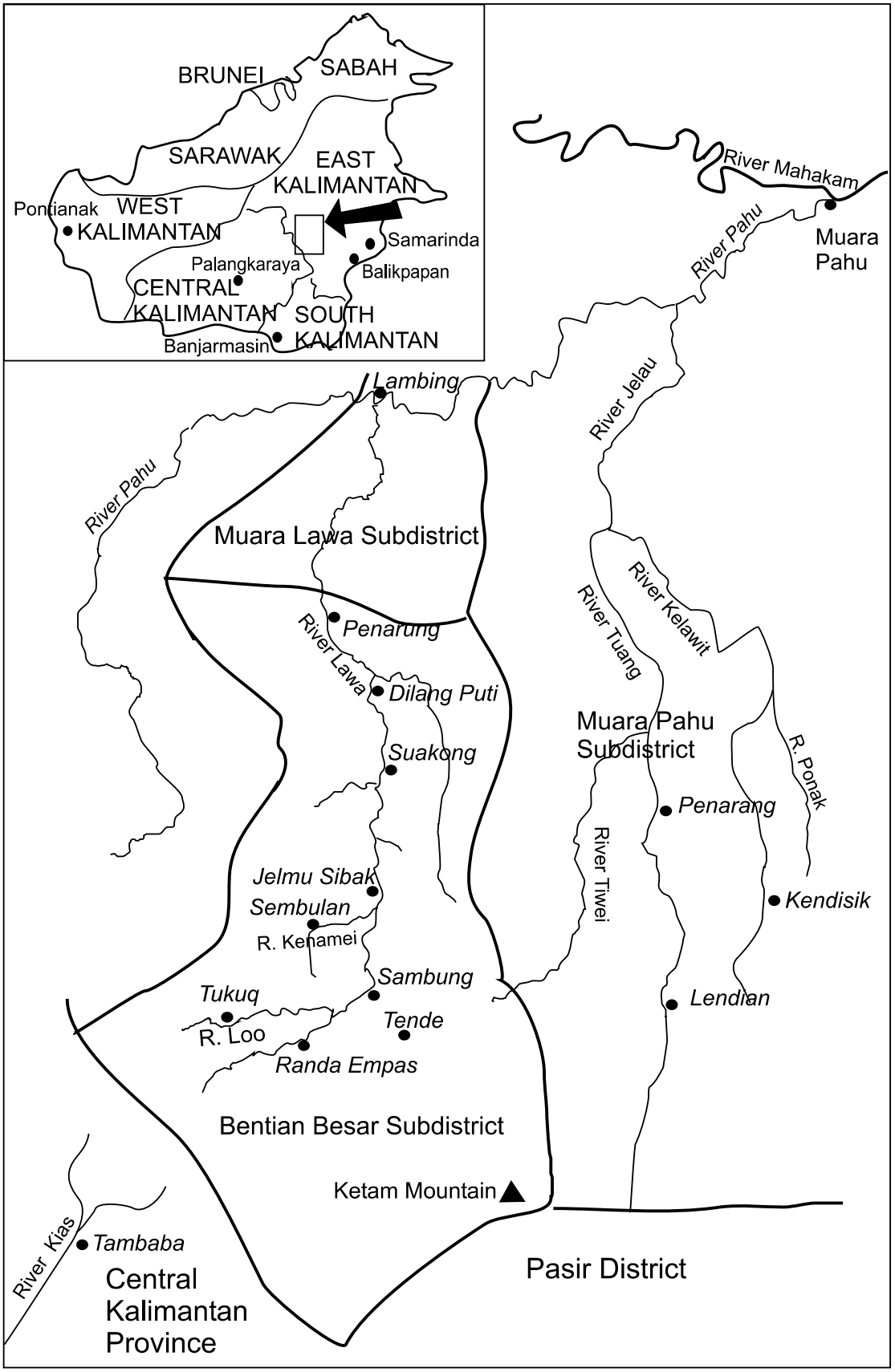
[12] Joseph Weinstock's dissertation *Kaharingan and the Luangan Dayaks* (1983a) is perhaps the most important single work dealing with the Luangans as a whole. Other major works dealing with specific Luangan subgroups in English are Stephanie Fried's dissertation on Bentian forestry and landright conflicts (1995); two small books by Michael Hopes et al. (1996a, 1996b) on Benuaq traditional religion and magic, and Christian Gönner's (2001) book on Benuaq forestry. To my knowledge there are almost no other publications in English on the Luangans or any Luangan subgroups, except for a few articles by Fried (2000, 2003), Herrmans (2004), Massing (1982, 1983), Sillander (1995, 2002), Weinstock (1983b, 1987), and two articles by Martinus Nanang (1988, n.d.). There is a little more material in Indonesian, the accessibility of which is somewhat restricted. This material includes several *Akademi Pemerintahan Dalam Negeri* and other government reports of which at least one (Basrun Gamas 1971) deals specifically with the Bentian, as well as a number of lower level university reports, including a few University of Mulawarman publications on Bentian rattan cultivation (e.g. Budiono 1993; Mulya 1993). The greater part of these Indonesian reports consist of brief surveys, and all which I have come across concern some specific Luangan subgroup(s), most frequently the Benuaq and the Tunjung. Among the most substantial are Sarwoto Kertodipoero's book *Kaharingan: Religi dan Penghidupan di Pehuluan Kalimantan* (1963) on the Dusun, L. Dyson's thesis *Sistim dan Motivasi Gotong Royong pada Sukubangsa Dayak Tunjung di Kabupaten Kutai* (1979), and Yohannes Bonoh's publication *Belian Bawo* (1984/85) on the Benuaq. A number of linguistic surveys of the Bawo, Lawangan and Taboyan do also deserve notice (*Morfologi dan Sintaksis Bahasa Lawangan* 1992; *Morfologi dan Sintaksis Bahasa Tawoyan* 1989; *Struktur Bahasa Bawo* 1989; *Struktur Bahasa Lawangan* 1985; *Struktur Bahasa Tawoyan* 1992). Finally there is some Dutch (and German) material from the colonial period. Most of this material consists of travel accounts or administrative reports of government officials. As far as I know it does not include any major studies specifically concerned with the Luangans or a Luangan subgroup. Among the most useful references for the Luangan in general are Feuilletau de Bruyn (1934), Grabowsky (1888), Knappert (1905), Mallinckrodt (1974[1925], 1926, 1927, 1928), Schwaner (1854), and Te Wechel (1915). Of special interest for the Bentian is Knappert (1905), Schwaner (1854) and an article by Witkamp (1928).

The Bentian: Location and Identity

In Borneo the so-called indigenous population (excluding the Chinese, Buginese, and other, more or less recent immigrants) is commonly divided into two basic categories: Malays and Dayaks, both of which are highly heterogenous, consisting of many different subgroups. The Malays are — with a few exceptions — Malay-speaking Muslims who mainly live along the coasts and the lower reaches of the larger rivers, and typically subsist by fishing, trade, and wet rice cultivation. The Dayaks, on the other hand, are mostly inland-dwelling dry rice cultivators who follow either Christianity or local religions, and speak a large number of mutually unintelligible languages. Today, large portions of both categories are occupied with wage labor, especially in the coastal cities, but also in the interior, in the latter case often for logging and mining companies or on plantations. Religious affiliation is the principal (and often only) marker distinguishing Malays from Dayaks. For the Dayaks, adopting Islam is usually equivalent to becoming Malay (*masuk Melayu*), and an unknown but large proportion of the Malays originated as Dayaks, while the others presumably descended from Muslim or Hindu migrants from Sumatra and Java (however, even those Malays who migrated to the island may in fact ultimately originate from Borneo, according to current linguistic theory which places the homeland of the "Malay language community" in Western Borneo: see e.g. Adelaar 1995; Collins 2001). Of a total Bornean population exceeding ten million (including Indonesian Borneo, Malaysian Borneo, and Brunei), more than two thirds are Malays, while only around two million are Dayaks. Most Dayak groups are small but there are also some more populous groups, including the famous Iban in the northwest and the Ngaju in the south, who both number over half a million.

The Bentian are a rather small group of Dayaks consisting of only 3000 to 3500 people. They are famous for their rattan which they cultivate as a cash-crop on their swiddens in addition to rice and other subsistence crops. They live in a relatively remote upriver area in the district (*kabupaten*) of West Kutai in the province of East Kalimantan in Indonesian Borneo, close to the border with the province of Central Kalimantan, some 200-300 kilometers inland (see Map 1). Most Bentians live in the subdistrict (*kecamatan*) of Bentian Besar, or "Great Bentian," and their present-day self-identity is closely connected to this fact. All in all, there are twelve villages with a Bentian majority, seven of which are located within Bentian Besar (Dilang Puti, Suakong, Jelmu Sibak, Sembulan, Sambung, Tende, Randa Empas, Tukuq) while three are situated in the neighboring subdistrict of Muara Pahu (Penawang, Lendian, Kendisik). One village (Tambaba) is located on the other side of the provincial border in Central Kalimantan, in the subdistrict of Gunung Purei, which is part of Barito Utara district. However, this village's inhabitants also used to live in what is now East Kalimantan and Bentian Besar before they moved to their present location about a century ago. In addition to these



Map 1. The Bentian Area

villages, there are minorities of Bentians living in a few other villages, most notably in Benangin, a large village on the middle reaches of the Teweh River in Central Kalimantan, and in Penarung, the only village with a non-Bentian (Benuaq) majority within Bentian Besar, located downstream from Dilang Puti, the subdistrict capital. The population in the Bentian villages varies from about seventy to seven hundred inhabitants, who are rarely present in the villages all at once because of the dual type of residence that most of them practice, spending a large part of the year on their swidden fields.

The population density of Bentian Besar and adjacent subdistricts is very low. Bentian Besar (1466 km^2, with a population of less than 3500 people) has only slightly over 2 inhabitants per square kilometer which makes it the subdistrict which had the lowest population density of all subdistricts which were part of the district of Kutai before it was subdivided into several smaller districts in 1999. In many respects Bentian Besar has been a rather underdeveloped subdistrict, as has also the part of the subdistrict of Muara Pahu where the other East Kalimantan Bentian villages are located. In government statistics from the 1990s, many forms of information which were documented for other Kutai subdistricts were lacking for Bentian Besar. At the time of my fieldwork, Bentian Besar was also the only subdistrict in Kutai which did not yet have a government health center (*puskesmas*), and throughout the 1990s the primary schools (*SD*) of several villages were periodically closed as a result of a shortage of teachers willing to work in the area. Few Bentians have an education above the six year primary school (to attend secondary school, or *SMP,* children must move to the downstream center of Muara Lawa in a neighboring subdistrict). Those who do mostly come from Dilang Puti (Bentian Besar's subdistrict capital) or neighboring Suakong, a large, early Christianized village, and have often left the area and moved to the coastal cities of Tenggarong or Samarinda. Roads to most Bentian villages were only established in the 1990s, a fact which becomes more significant if we consider that most rivers in the area are very shallow, and with the exception of the lower half of the Lawa do not permit transportation by river. Electricity was still lacking in most villages in the 1990s although at least one house in every village had an individually owned gasoline fueled generator. Important changes nevertheless affected the Bentian area in the 1980s and 1990s, which saw the coming of several logging companies based or operating in the area, and the establishment, in 1995, of a large transmigration site, housing 250 families, in the midst of Bentian Besar. Internal transport in the area is nevertheless still difficult and restricted, and many villages in Bentian Besar have little contact with the subdistrict capital (or the transmigration site), and communicate more frequently with other centers outside the area.

All villages in Bentian Besar are located along the Lawa River, a tributary of the Pahu River, which in its turn is a branch of the Mahakam, one of the largest rivers on the island, and the main line of transportation in Kutai, connecting (through public river boat

traffic) the interior with Tenggarong, the former district capital and residency of the Sultan of Kutai, and Samarinda, the provincial capital of East Kalimantan, located in the river delta at the mouth of the Mahakam (see Map 2). Those Bentian villages which belong to the subdistrict of Muara Pahu are situated on the upper reaches of the Tuang and Kelawit rivers, which, like the Lawa, are tributaries of the Pahu. Among Bentians as well as among downriver Dayaks and Malays, the name Bentian is often used as a designation for the Dayaks who live on the upper or uppermost reaches of the Lawa, Tuang and Kelawit rivers, upstream from their downriver Benuaq Dayak neighbors. This area may also be regarded as the Bentian homeland, as the Bentian (or at least most of them) have been living there for as long as they remember. Sometimes, however, the Bentian area is more narrowly defined as consisting only of the upper Lawa River basin, a result of the fact that the Bentian Besar district, since it was established in the early 1960s, only covers this area.

The one Bentian village (Tambaba) which is situated in the province of Central Kalimantan is located on the Kias River, a tributary of the Teweh River which, in its turn, is an important branch of the Barito, the largest river in south Borneo. This village is thus located on the other side of the watershed separating the Barito River system from the Mahakam River system. Although the Bentian homeland is part of the latter river system, the Bentian have long had frequent contacts with their neighbors on the other side of the watershed and many of them do in fact consider themselves as having more in common with their Dayak neighbors on the Teweh River than with their downriver Benuaq Dayak neighbors in Kutai, even though Indonesian and western scholars, following widespread Benuaq opinion, often have classified the Bentian as a Benuaq subgroup (e.g. Massing 1983:85). The perceived closeness between the Bentian and their Teweh River Dayak neighbors is largely due to the short distance from the Bentian area to the Teweh River (a day's walk from the upper Lawa villages), but it is also related to the fact that Bentians, like other Luangans, locate their ancestral homeland in the upper Teweh River area.

Unlike most Dayaks, the Bentian do not conceive of themselves as a riverine people. As among Bornean inhabitants in general, the upriver-downriver distinction nevertheless provides the main principle of geographical orientation. The Bentian thus primarily identify themselves as an upriver (*daye*) people, and they do so both in a wider geographical context, in distinction to coastal peoples and peoples from the Barito and Mahakam regions, and in a more restricted local setting, when distinguishing themselves from their closest neighbors, the downriver Benuaq, and the Teweh River Luangan. However, Bentians also sometimes distinguish themselves from these Dayak neighbors by pointing out that the latter are "riverine people" (*orang pantai*, I.), while they themselves are "inland people" (*orang darat*, I.). In addition, they also occasionally refer

to themselves as a hill (*bawo*) people, a designation which points to the fact that transport in their area was, and still is, mainly by foot.

If asked about why they call themselves "the Bentian," present-day Bentians usually say that it is because they live in (or originate from) the Bentian Besar subdistrict. Lawa River Bentians frequently define the Bentian as the people who live in Bentian Besar, thus excluding Central Kalimantan Bentians and the Bentian of the Tuang and the Kelawit rivers, but including the Benuaq who live within Bentian Besar. Another typical answer is that the word "Bentian" signifies Dayaks who live on the uppermost reaches of rivers (specified, if required, as the upper Lawa, Tuang and Kelawit rivers). Following this line of reasoning, the ethnonym "Bentian," like the great majority of Dayak group names, may be seen as a local identity label (Babcock 1974:196; King 1988:238). However, although closely connected with a particular locality, the word "Bentian" is not derived from a specific toponym: there is no river or other landscape feature in the Bentian's territory which carries the name "Bentian." Before the subdistrict of Bentian Besar was established, the ethnonym "Bentian" was only loosely associated with a somewhat loosely demarcated inland area. The presence of certain mountains containing caves in and near this area is, however, a matter of some significance for Bentian notions of how identity and locality are connected.

The name "Bentian" is also ascribed to a small and colorful bird (*Erythura Prasina*, the Longtailed Munia), which purportedly lives in caves or crevices of some of the mountains in the area. Normally not seen, this enigmatic bird sometimes invades Bentian rice fields in great numbers at the time of the harvest (or more rarely, after planting). It is also reported as one of the most dreaded pests of rice in other upland areas of Borneo (see Smythies 1960:51,492-93, for the Kinabalu and Kelabit regions, and Tsing 1984:183,188-89, for the Meratus mountains), but it appears to have a rather localized distribution, and the Bentian treat it as emblematic of their own area. However, Bentians usually deny that the ethnonym is taken from the name of the bird (such a connection is perceived as implying primitiveness), instead claiming that bird and people share the same name because both live in the same area. The Bentian's relation to the bird is nevertheless important, and it is elaborated in the special way in which they collectively plant rice: long chains of men holding dibbling sticks followed by women scattering rice seeds, covering the rice fields by moving in widely winding, interlocking circuits, mimetically representing swarms of Bentian birds flying over the ripe rice fields, a custom signified by the verb *mementian,* which is derived from the root word "Bentian" (see Plate 19).

Interestingly, not all Bentians practice this custom, which is rather recent in many of the communities where it is performed. It is said that a hundred years ago it was only the people in a few upriver Bentian communities who planted rice in this way, while most Bentians did so in the "ordinary" way, by walking in straight rows, back and forth along

the lengths of the rice fields. The people who then planted rice in this way were the Bia, Rana and Merayo communities of the upper Lawa. Significantly, these communities were also collectively known as "the Bentian," in contrast to the other communities in the Bentian Besar area who were known by other designations and did not yet recognize "Bentian" as a name for themselves. C.A.L.M. Schwaner's (1853) use of the term (based on information that he obtained during his travels during 1843-1848) conforms to this usage.[13] Until sometime in the early or mid-twentieth century, the ethnonym "Bentian" was also, according to informants, predominantly used with specific reference to these communities. However, informants also said that they had started to employ the term in a wider sense before that, more precisely, when traveling downstream to Tenggarong to pay tribute to the Sultan of Kutai, even though they did not until recently use it in this sense among themselves.

According to little-known information recorded by Stephanie Fried (1995:90), it was, in fact, one of the sultans of Kutai who introduced the term "Bentian" as a designation with a wider application, in a year when leaders from several communities in the Bentian Besar area who visited him all reported that their rice fields had been attacked by the Bentian bird. The Sultan then announced that "from now on your name will be Bentian, since your place of residence is the bentian cave area" (Fried 1995:90). This event possibly occurred sometime in the early nineteenth century, in a period when trade in the region significantly increased and the first remembered Bentian contacts with the sultanate were made (see below). The first documentation in the literature of use of the term in this sense is probably assistant resident Dewall's report on Kutai which mentions the "Bentican" (*sic*) (1849:84,132,133). Despite this usage, however, the term did not gain any widespread local popularity before sometime in the mid-twentieth century. When Europeans visited Dilang Puti, the present-day subdistrict capital, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the people there were not described as Bentians, but as unspecified Dayaks or "Benuaq" (see Bock [1881]:141-45; Knappert 1905:623-25; Witkamp 1928:421-22). These observations correspond to what is remembered by the village's inhabitants today, who claim that they indeed were not Bentians before very recently. This fact is especially notable since these Bentians, due to the accessibility and status of the subdistrict capital, have long been in a position in which they frequently represent the Bentian and "Bentian-ness" to visiting outsiders.

At the same time, however, the Kutai administration had (at least from the early twentieth century) started to use the term "Bentian Besar" as a designation for an "area" (*wilayah*) under its jurisdiction, an area which roughly corresponds to the present-day subdistrict and in which local leaders receiving titles from the sultan were explicitly

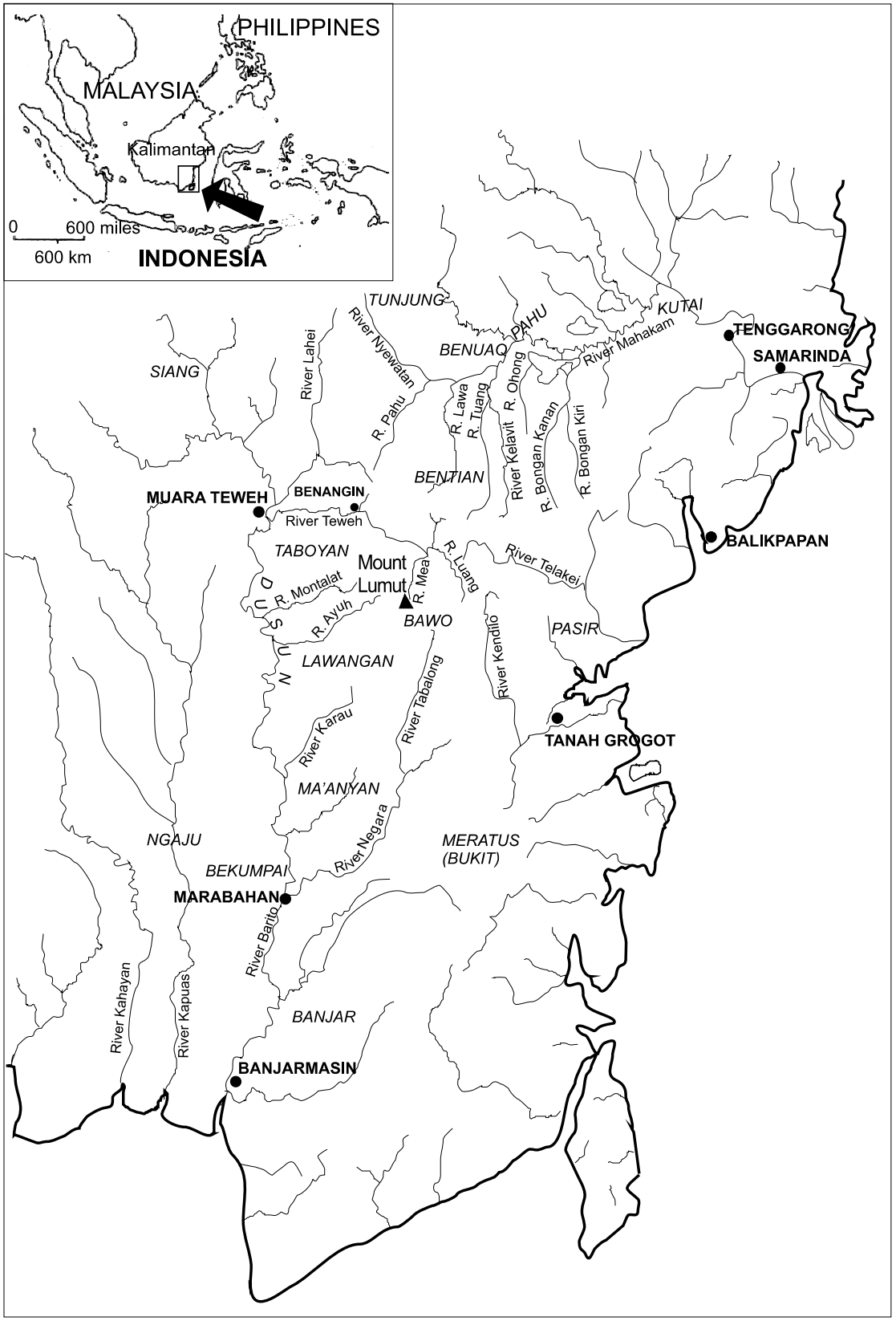
[13] See particularly his map of the Barito region which extends to the Bentian area in Kutai.

assigned to govern according to the letters which authenticated these titles.[14] Assumingly it was this exonymic usage of the term "Bentian" which gave rise to the remembered early Bentian use of the term in the wider sense during downriver tributary visits. Thus it seems that it was through external influence resulting from increasing regional integration that a more general identification with the term gradually developed, an assumption given further support by the more recently developing importance of a general Bentian identity which has followed the establishment of the subdistrict of Bentian Besar in the postcolonial period. Nevertheless, even today identification with the term is still remarkably weak in many Bentian communities (such as Dilang Puti), and traces of the original usage may be seen in that the upper Lawa Bentian are regarded by themselves and others as the "real" or "original Bentian" (*Bentian asli* I., *Bentian asar*). In addition, these Bentian communities are occasionally looked to as a model for "Bentian-ness" by other Bentians, as in the case of *mementian,* the rice-planting custom, even though the other Bentians are generally disinclined to identify with the upper Lawa Bentians on account of the fact that they practice polyandry, leave their numerous water buffaloes untied, and generally lead a relatively unmodernized, and hence stigmatized life, considered to bring disrepute on the group as a whole. It is perhaps not entirely by coincidence that the practice of *mementian* has spread in a manner roughly paralleling the increasing importance of Bentian identity, even though the appeal of this custom also derives from other qualities than from its capacity to function as a marker of Bentian-ness, which is demonstrated by the fact that it has been adopted not only by Bentians, but also by their neighbors on the upper half of the Teweh River. The custom of *mementian* augments Bentian self-identity, and even if it is not yet regularly practiced in all Bentian communities, a tendency to exaggerate the actual extent to which it is performed points to its perceived symbolic value, which is enhanced by present-day Indonesian cultural politics stressing the importance of objectified cultural tradition as an emblem of ethnic identity.

The Luangan Category

Like their Dayak neighbors, Bentians occasionally use the term "Luangan" as an ethnonym. Together with these neighbors and a number of other, linguistically and culturally related Dayak groups, the Bentians have also been classified by scholars as

[14] It is possible that it was as a result of Dutch influence, more specifically, a number of administrative reforms introduced after 1900, that a *wilayah* named Bentian Besar was first established. However, the area may well have been attributed such status by the Kutai administration before that, as it seems that the sultan was using the ethnonym Bentian in what I have called the wider sense already in the nineteenth century. Further investigation would be required to resolve this issue.



Map 2. Southeast Borneo

belonging to an ethnic category labelled "Luangan" (Weinstock 1983a:198-226), or "Lawangan" (Mallinckrodt 1927:579-85, 1928:28-30; Riwut 1958:220-221). This category, which comprises a large number of people (more than 100,000, if all potential candidates for subgroups are included) is distributed over a vast territory of around a quarter of a million square kilometers.[15] Still, the Luangan, or at least the Luangan concept, is rather poorly known. Here I will provide a presentation of this somewhat elusive category: Who are they, and what does it mean to be a Luangan for them? As virtually all Luangans have been poorly studied, I will also briefly describe the Luangan subgroups, using, unless otherwise stated, information that I have obtained during my fieldwork.

The Luangan live in an area located between two of the major rivers of Borneo — east of the middle reaches of the Barito, and south of the middle Mahakam (see Map 2). The number of the groups seen as belonging to the category varies with the scholars who have classified them, as does the degree to which the members of these groups recognize Luangan identity. In some instances, the boundary between the subgroups or that with other groups is also diffuse, and many individuals have multiple identities. Despite considerable dialect variation, most Luangans speak closely related languages which, with a few exceptions, are included in what Hudson (1967a) calls the "northeastern division of the Barito language family." As an example, we may note that the languages of the Bentian and their closest Luangan neighbors, the Benuaq and the Teweh River Luangans, are mutually intelligible, whereas the languages of the geographically most distant Luangan subgroups (e.g. Dusuns, downriver Pasirese, Tunjung) are quite incomprehensible to Bentians if they have no prior knowledge of them (which they quite often have, however).

The Luangan Subgroups

Three attempts at comprehensive classification of the Luangan subgroups exist in the literature: that of the Dutch colonial officer Jacob Mallinckrodt (1927:579-85, 1928:28-30), who attempted to codify the *adat* (customary law) of the Dayaks of southeast Borneo, that of the province of Central Kalimantan's famous Dayak governor, Tjilik Riwut (1958:220-221), which can be seen as an extended version of Mallinckrodt's work,

[15] For approximate population figures for different Luangan subgroups in the late 1970s, see Weinstock (1983a:198-226). It is difficult to give more than very rough estimates for the population numbers of the various Luangan subgroups or the Luangan as a whole as ethnic affiliation (*suku*) is not specified in censuses. Moreover, intermarriage within the Luangan category and with other groups, as well as a widespread indifference toward questions of ethnicity, makes ethnic identification a rather unclear matter for many Luangans.

and that of the American anthropologist Joseph Weinstock (1983a:198-226), who did fieldwork in the upper Teweh area in 1979-81.

Mallinckrodt was probably, as Weinstock (1983a:78-79) has pointed out, the first to define Luangan as a tribal entity; he listed 21 subgroups in what he called the *Stammengroep der Lawangan*. The classification of Weinstock includes a much smaller number of subgroups, but by putting these together we arrive at a totality fairly closely corresponding to the totality represented by Mallinckrodt's Lawangan concept (the main difference between the classifications is that Mallinckrodt also lists what we could call subdivisions of the subgroups mentioned by Weinstock). The terms "Luangan" and "Lawangan" can also be regarded as nearly equivalent; if pronounced, the difference between them almost disappears. So as not to make my presentation of the Luangan unduly complicated, I will here only deal with Weinstock's classification, even if it could be argued that a more detailed classification would more faithfully conform to autonymic usages. It includes the following subgroups: Tunjung, Benuaq, Bentian, Purei, Taboyan, Pahu, Pasir, Bawo, Paku-Kerau (Lawangan), Malang, Bayan, Dusun Tengah, Dusun Hilir, Dusun Dayeh.[16] I have indicated the approximate locations of most of these subgroups (and of some other southern Borneo Dayaks) on Map 2.

With the possible exception of the Dusun Dayeh,[17] the five last-mentioned Luangan subgroups are all so-called Dusun groups who live on the eastern banks of the Barito, and it should be mentioning that they themselves and most Luangans distinguish them from other Luangans. According to my knowledge there does, in fact, not exist any indigenous classifications lumping together the Dusun with the other groups mentioned here. They were also treated as a separate tribal group by Mallinckrodt (1927:585, 1928:30) on precisely these grounds (even if he did also remark that they are really part of the

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[16] Weinstock (1983a:228), noting Mallinckrodt's inclusion of this group in his Lawangan category, also mentions the Bukit of South Kalimantan, the people studied and labelled Meratus by Anna Tsing (1984,1993). He notes, however, that they should not really, on the basis of linguistic and cultural evidence, be counted among the Luangan. Bawo Dayaks with whom I have spoken regard the Bukit as different from themselves despite similarities in social organization and habitat. According to Tsing (1984:40), the Meratus language is closely related to Banjar Malay, although it seems to me that there is a sufficient amount of Luangan-related words in the language to postulate either a Luangan (or possibly Maanyan) substratum, or extensive borrowing. Mallinckrodt (1927:584) regarded the Bukits of the Tabalong area (who in fact identify as Bawo and speak a Luangan isolect) as remaining in their original state, not having lost their original dialects and become influenced by the Malays like the others. Dewall (1850:484) and Tsing (1984:22, following Ismail et al. 1977:10) have suggested that there is a possibility that the Bukit might have originated as Banjar Malays, that is, that they have adopted Dayak life-style and language influences, rather than the other way around.

[17] This group occupies the area of the upper Tabalong river (a tributary of the lower Barito) in South Kalimantan. According to my information and that of Mallinckrodt (1927:584), there are also Bawo Dayaks living in the same area. It is possible that these Bawo and the group referred to as Dusun Dayeh by Weinstock are actually one and the same group (or then there may be two groups living in the same area). At any rate it seems that this Dusun category is different from the other Luangan Dusuns in several, including locational and linguistic, respects (cf. Weinstock 1983a:226).

Luangan, in terms of their beliefs regarding the afterworld, for instance). According to Alfred Hudson (1967a), who conducted a lexico-statistical study of the peoples of south Borneo, the Dusun are linguistically intermediate between the Luangan and the Ma'anyan to the south. In comparison with the other Luangans, they have lived in nucleated villages since long ago and they have not built any larger extended family houses for a long time, and possibly never any longhouses.

"Paku-Karau" is a designation coined by Weinstock for a subgroup who live on the Karau and Ayuh tributaries of the middle Barito. This group is better known as, and call themselves, "Lawangan" (or "Lowangan"), and thus uses as an autonym the same term that Mallinckrodt applied for the whole tribal group. It was probably also from the name of this group that Mallinckrodt obtained the term for the larger category and much of his information on the Lawangans actually regards this specific subgroup. Today the Lawangan live intermixed with Ma'anyan settlers. Linguistically they are fairly closely related to the Bentian, the Benuaq, some of the Bawo groups, and the people who Weinstock refers to as "Taboyan" and "Purei"; together these groups may also be regarded as forming the linguistic and geographical core of the Luangan.

"Bawo" is an ethnonym used by or for several different Luangan groups who have in common residence in hilly, upriver territory (usually lacking navigable rivers), and a rather loose social organization, characterized by more or less strongly persisting residence in dispersed swidden houses and a weakly institutionalized hierarchy. Most of these groups are, or used to be, regarded as primitive (*primitif*, I.) or backward (*terbelakang*, I.) by their downstream Dayak and Malay neighbors. Many of them have now become Muslims and some have been resettled by the Indonesian government. Weinstock mentions only the Bawo of the upper Ayuh (a tributary of the middle Barito region) but groups to which the term "Bawo" has been applied also live, or until recently lived, in the following locations: the upper Tabalong (a lower Barito tributary), the upper Bongan (a tributary of the Mahakam), and the upper Teweh and its tributary the Luang. In addition, several upriver locations in the Pasir region should also be mentioned, although the Bawo group occupying them is somewhat different linguistically from the others, speaking a dialect more related to the Pasir language which is a relatively distinct Luangan isolect. Weinstock applied the term "Pasir" to all Pasirese, a population including the Bawo of Pasir, but also other downriver Pasirese, some of whom founded the Pasir Sultanate. The great majority of these Pasirese (including the Bawo) are Muslim today, but they have retained their Luangan-related language and to some extent regard themselves as different from the Malays.[18]

[18] Despite distinguishing themselves from the Malays and speaking a Luangan dialect, however, it appears that the Pasir Muslims do not identify as Luangans (Weinstock 1983a:201).

The term “Taboyan” Weinstock employed for the Luangan Dayaks who occupy the Teweh and Montalat tributaries of the Barito. According to my information and historical references (e.g. Schwaner 1853; Engelhard 1901; Mallinckrodt 1927,1928) this term used to be recognized as an ethnonym only by the Luangans on the lower Teweh (downstrem of Benangin) and the Montalat but not by the Bentian's neighbors on the upper Teweh who even now do not commonly use this term. Like some other Luangans, the latter only recognize more restrictive collective identities, which is the case also with the Purei, the population of a single village on the Kias tributary of the upper Teweh, who Weinstock (1983a:209), like Mallinckrodt (1928:29) before him, singled out as a distinct Luangan subgroup. Both the Purei and the other Luangans of the upper half of the Teweh are very similar to the Bentian in most respects. Indeed these people and the Bentian share a consciousness of kind (strengthened by intermarriage), and even if they do not differ much from the Taboyan of the lower Teweh in either linguistic or cultural terms, they do conceive of a line of separation between themselves and the latter, who may be regarded as intermediate in such terms between them and the Lawangans further south. The Bentian and the upper Teweh Luangans have in common an upriver residence and a comparatively dispersed settlement pattern not unlike that of the Bawo Dayaks, different mainly in that they, in distinction to the latter, built extended family houses (*lou*) which, particularly among the Bentian, sometimes took the form of small longhouses (Sillander 2002). The Bentian differ from their upper Teweh River neighbors mainly on account of this fact, and with regards to some minor aspects of *adat* (custom) and culture reflecting primarily a lesser degree of modernizing influence. The upper Teweh Luangan are remarkable in that they are the least Christianized of all Luangans. As already indicated, they also occupy the inner geographical center of the Luangan area, an area which represents the landscape of Luangan mythology.

The Benuaq are the Bentian's downriver neighbors in Kutai and I will frequently have opportunity to refer to them. They live on the Pahu River and its tributaries and on the Bongan and Ohong river systems. In comparison with the Bentian, the Benuaq developed a higher degree of stratification in preindependence days (this seems to be true also of the Lawangan, who, like the Benuaq, usually occupy navigable rivers and locations more accessible from the coast than those inhabited by the Bentian). The Benuaq also more frequently built partitioned longhouses, some of which were comparatively large. These and other minor differences (e.g. linguistic) distinguishing the Benuaq from the Bentian reflect the Benuaq's location at the periphery of Luangan territory and their relative proximity to the culturally distinct Central Borneo Dayaks, especially the Tunjung. The Benuaq are actually a rather heterogenous Luangan subgroup in and by themselves. According to oral history, some of them originated from the Teweh River area, whereas another part is said to have originated in Kutai, according to some informants on the lower Mahakam. It seems that identification with the Benuaq ethnonym also used to be

much less extensive in the past, and that only membership in more restrictive local groups was recognized. There are still groups within the area demarcated as the Benuaq area by scholars who locals normally distinguish from the Benuaq and refer to with other, more localized terms.[19]

The Tunjung, who refer to themselves as "Tonyoi," live on the middle Mahakam in and around an area known as the Tunjung plateau. Their language is clearly different from the other Luangan subgroups and apparently only distantly related. It is mainly in interaction with the Tunjung that the Benuaq have adopted some central Bornean cultural traits. However, the Tunjung have possibly been more influenced by the Benuaq than vice versa. The Tunjung have adopted strong Luangan linguistic and cultural characteristics. Perhaps most significantly, they have taken up Kaharingan ritual practices and eschatological beliefs and it was on this basis that Weinstock included the Tunjung in the Luangan category, even if they otherwise are quite different. Like the Benuaq, the Tunjung are also internally heterogenous and it appears that they constitute an amalgamation of two subgroups with separate origins (Knappert 1905:592). Another interesting characteristic of the Tunjung which I will address later is that they maintained close contacts with the Kutai sultanate. Some of their leaders were evidently Islamized and they seem to have constituted something of a small sultanate in their own right (Weinstock 1983a:126). This is true also of the last of the Luangan subgroups listed by Weinstock, the Pahu of the area of the mouth of the Pahu River (see Map 2). Like the Tunjung and some of the Benuaq, this group might also have originated in Kutai. It is disputable, however, to what extent that we can still speak of "a group" in this case because the Pahu are today Muslims who have become extensively assimilated by their Kutai Malay neighbors. However, the Pahu were originally Dayaks who lived in longhouses and spoke a Luangan related language up to the nineteenth century during which they progressively became Islamized and adopted Malay identity and the Kutai Malay dialect (see Dalton [1831a]:E4; Tromp 1889:278; *Kumpulan* 1979:253-55; Weinstock 1983a:91).

[19] Examples of such groups are the Daya of the upper Nyewatan and the Ohong of the river with the same name. In fact there are generally no Benuaq at the headwaters of the rivers that they occupy; here we instead find, or at least used to find, other Luangan groups such as the Daya (Nyewatan), the Bentian (Lawa, Tuang, Kelawit), and the Bawo (Bongan Kiri) and Luwangan (Bongan Kanan). This is a situation which intrigued me, but for which I could elicit no interpretation from informants. However, the word *benua* (or cognates) is a term used in Luangan and other Austronesian languages to signify a village or territory (Fox 1993:12). I surmise that the ethnonym "Benuaq" may have had some connection with the process of settling down in villages which began there in the nineteenth century. For a period, this process entailed a situation in which the people at the lower and middle reaches of some rivers became "village people," while those at the upper reaches retained a more dispersed swidden settlement. This could have motivated a conceptual distinction between the former and the latter which would explain some aspects of the described ethnic distribution on these rivers.

I have now presented the Luangan subgroups and briefly commented on what distinguishes them from each other. Now we shall have a look at what unites them, apart from the linguistic similarities to which I have already alluded. First of all, we should perhaps note that the Luangan are not very different from the other major Dayak groups of south Borneo, that is, the Ngaju, Ma'anyan and Ot Danum. In fact, together these four groups make up the Barito language family described by Hudson (1967a) and besides linguistic similarities there are also strong cultural affinities linking them and setting them apart from other Dayaks. Foremost among these cultural affinities are religious beliefs and adherence to the now officially recognized Hindu Kaharingan religion, a central characteristic of which is secondary mortuary rituals. Other important features which most of these Dayak groups have in common is their comparatively dispersed settlement pattern, and the fact that they seldom built longhouses.[20]

It is difficult to distinguish the Luangan from the other Barito family Dayaks on the basis of objective linguistic or cultural criteria. Most Luangan characteristics are either shared with these Dayaks or do not apply to the Luangan as a whole. Moreover, those Luangans who live at the peripheries of the Luangan territory are sometimes more similar to their non-Luangan neighbors than to many of the Luangans, culturally as well as linguistically. On top of that, subjective criteria are equally unsatisfactory, as Luangan identity is generally very weak and unexpressed among most Luangan subgroups. In fact (and contrary to what one could be led to believe by Weinstock's ethnography), the term "Luangan" is not even known by many of their members. The level of "tribal group consciousness" is, in other words, very low among the Luangans, and identification with more local categories such as the subgroup or more inclusive and general categories such as Dayak or Indonesian, is much more common. What then allows us to talk about a Luangan category?

According to Weinstock, the one thing which distinguishes the Luangans from the other Dayaks of southern Borneo is their origin. When he replaced the term "Lawangan" of Mallinckrodt with "Luangan," his justification for this was, first, his finding that the Luangans themselves use this term, and second, that they do so because they originated from the river Luang, a tributary of the upper Teweh (1983a:viii,72-77). Weinstock found evidence for his hypothesis of the common origin of the Luangan subgroups not only in the fact that many of them look to the upper Teweh area as their ancestral homeland, but

[20] The Ot Danum and some Luangans who live close to the central Borneo cultural area built longhouses more frequently than the other Barito family Dayaks. Prior to the mid-nineteenth century, massive longhouses surrounded by fortresses (*benteng*) were apparently occasionally built (for purposes of defense) also by many other Barito family Dayaks (see Knapen 2001:85-86; de Roy 1706:124; Müller 1857:226; Schwaner 1853:219, 1896:cxc-cxci; Weddik 1851:22).

also in that they believe that the *liau*, one of the two souls of the dead, resides on Gunung Lumut, a mountain in the vicinity of Sungai Luang. On *gombok* and *kwangkai* secondary mortuary rituals, death shamans (*warah, pengewarah*) symbolically guide *liau* to Gunung Lumut along real routes in this world. According to Weinstock, these routes are actually reverse versions of those along which the different Luangan subgroups once migrated from their original homeland to where they live now (1983a:73).

This hypothesis of Weinstock's is fascinating, but it is not confirmed by the information that I have collected on migrations of Luangan subgroups. Routes of migrations are usually much more circuitous and diverse than the routes to Mount Lumut described in the chants of the death shamans (which tend to be as short and straight as possible), and in some cases they deviate considerably from them. However, Weinstock's assertion that Luangans look to the upper Teweh area as their ancestral homeland is not incorrect, even if this does not necessarily mean, as I will argue, that they all originated from this area. Most, if not all Luangans (including the Bentian), do actually postulate an early origin from this area. However, only some actually claim to remember having migrated from there in historical time.[21] The area in question is looked to as an ancestral homeland primarily because it was there that the protagonists of a particular corpus of myths used to live. As I see it, it is this mythology, shared to a greater or lesser extent by all Luangans, along with aspects of a religious tradition intimately bound up with it, that provides the foundation of Luangan identity, rather than the fact or assumption of a common origin from a specific location.

Adherence to the Kaharingan religion, and more particularly the traditional Luangan version of Kaharingan, was also one of the principal criteria for Luangan identity proposed by Weinstock (1983a:81-82). In fact he regarded this criteria as sufficient, although not as critical for Luangan identity (Christian Luangans are also Luangans, in his view). He illustrated his case with the Tunjung, who, as we know, are different from the rest of the Luangan subgroups in terms of language and origin, but who nevertheless consider themselves Luangans because they have adopted Luangan religious practices and beliefs, including secondary mortuary rituals and the notion of Mount Lumut as the final abode of the *liau* (1983a:82,85-87,198). What this shows, in my view, is that the concept of "Luangan" is primarily a concept signifying identity with a religious tradition rather than being an ethnonym, in the strict sense of the term. In any case, the Luangan are certainly not an ethnic *group*, and it is doubtful even whether they qualify as an ethnic category. Sociologically speaking, the Luangan are an aggregate of a large number of widely dispersed local groups, which are not integrated within any over-reaching system of regional organization, and whose members only vaguely conceive of themselves as a

[21] These groups include part of the Benuaq and the Lawangan. Some Bawos who subsequently moved to Pasir and the Tabalong area also used to live on the upper Teweh.

totality distinct from other Dayaks. While it may be possible that most of these groups share a common origin, it is normally not this aspect of commonality which is invoked when the term is used. Instead, the possession of various attributes of religious identity such as eating pork (an important marker of non-Muslim identity throughout Borneo), the performance of a type of curing and thanksgiving/supplication rituals known as *belian luangan*, and the carrying out of Luangan eschatological practices is what is implied by the term "Luangan."

The concept of Luangan seems to be primarily associated with a religious tradition in its turn associated with the Luangans in the central parts of the Luangan area, or more particularly, the upper Teweh area.[22] Except as the location of Luangan mythology, this somewhat vaguely demarcated area is also regarded as the area from where the Luangan form of Kaharingan originated. It is a center of religious tradition, the importance of which reaches beyond the Luangan. As an expression of its importance in this respect we can regard the fact that the language of Luangan rituals closely resembles the Luangan isolect spoken in the upper Teweh area. This, and not the respective local language, is the one used by, for instance, Benuaq, Tunjung or Dusun shamans when they perform rituals, and the same language is also employed as a ritual language among the Ma'anyans on the lower Barito (Weinstock 1983a:41). Interestingly, the Ma'anyan also share some elements of Luangan mythology located to the central Luangan area, despite the fact that they claim a different origin from the Luangan, tracing their origin place to the Hulu Sungai area of South Kalimantan (Hudson 1967b:15).

Exactly what in this central Luangan religious tradition has made it so popular as to spread even beyond Luangan speakers is a complex question to which there appears to be no simple answer. There is, however, one factor — we could perhaps call it a geographical condition — which may explain the appeal of locating an ultimate origin and ancestral mythology at the central parts of the Luangan territory. I suggest that this area could have been attributed some of its significance because of the fact, recognized also by Luangans, that there are a large number of important rivers — the Teweh, Montalat, Ayuh, Karau, Tabalong, Kendilo, Telakei, Kelawit, Tuang, and Lawa — which all have their headwaters there, and which run outward in all cardinal directions, toward the Barito, toward the Mahakam, and toward the coast in Pasir, on the way cutting through the whole of the Luangan territory, in the manner of the veins of a leaf (see map

[22] By "the central parts of the Luangan area" or "the central Luangan area" I intentionally refer to a somewhat imprecise referent, an area whose outer boundaries toward the peripheries are vague and may vary somewhat in the different contexts in which I apply the concepts. Usually this area comprises more or less of the upper reaches of those (or most of those) rivers whose headwaters "meet" in the border area between Central and East Kalimantan (see Map 2). However, sometimes (particularly when referring to Luangan mythology) I use these designations more restrictively to what forms the approximate geographical and absolute cultural center within this area, that is, the upper Teweh (and, to a lesser degree, the upper Telakei).

2).[23] This area thus very manifestly constitutes a geographical center in the middle of the Luangan area, and on account of its hilly upland character, it may be likened to a plateau, comparable in several respects to some other, more famous and elevated Bornean plateaus such as the Apo Kayan in northern East Kalimantan and the Usun Apau in eastern Sarawak. Significantly, there are also many Dayak groups who consider themselves as having originated from these latter upland areas. While I do not mean to contest the origin stories of these groups, it seems to me that there are special, "natural" or inherent reasons why such plateaus are "good to think" as places of origin.[24] Furthermore, such locations are obviously not always the *ultimate* places of origin of the groups claiming to originate from them, even if they tend to be accredited with such status. As Peter Metcalf implies, when he points out that the Berawan, like other groups in central northern Borneo "take the period when they lived in the Usun Apau as their historical datum," such locations may serve as imaginary ancestral homelands provided that the groups in question have some migratory connection to them (1982:25). The geographical centrality of these areas both makes such connections likely and, perhaps more importantly, makes attribution of origins from them attractive on account of the widespread regional significance that this centrality ensures. An additional reason why such areas appear attractive in this respect may be the conceptual and religious significance of centers which is widespread in Southeast Asia, and is important also, as we shall see, among the Bentian.

Interestingly, the central part of the Luangan territory is also the area where the term "Luangan" is best known. In this area, unlike in the Mahakam and the Barito regions, the word "Luangan" is part of everyday vocabulary, and here we find people who occasionally use it as a primary autonymic designation.[25] However, the autonymic version of the concept is different from that of Weinstock and Mallinckrodt. In local usage the term "Luangan" stands for Dayaks in general or, as I was often told in reply to questions about its meaning, "people who eat pork." As some informants liked to express it, the

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[23] Weinstock erroneously refers to this place, of which he also provides a map, as "Neten Pali" (1983a:42,72). According to all my informants (Bentians and Teweh River Luangans), Neten Pali is unambiguously the name of the first ancestral village in Luangan mythology, said to be located at the headwaters of the Telakei River, in the interior of Pasir (its more precise location, which is haunted by ancestral spirits, is actually between the heads of three rivers: the Telakei, Kendilo, and Tuung, a tributary of the Teweh).

[24] Jerome Rousseau mentions that many groups claim to originate from Apo Kayan and that some of these claims seem "historically valid" while others are "unlikely" (1990:71). He also points out that the central position of Apo Kayan "makes it a conceptually attractive place of origin," and further, that its status as a homeland for some powerful and dominant groups makes an assumption of origin there "a way of dreaming of having been a conqueror" (1990:71).

[25] These people include the upper Teweh Luangan and the Bentians on the upper Lawa. Significantly, those Bentians who live downstream and thus further away from "the center" are less familiar with the term and less inclined to use it as an autonym.

term is actually "nothing but a *bahasa daerah* (local language) version of the Dayak concept of *bahasa Indonesia* (the national language)." According to these notions, autonymic Luangan identity is thus not restricted to the tribal group entity described in the literature; on the contrary, even Dayaks not familar with the term, such as the Ngaju or the Kenyah, are upon inquiry said to be Luangans. What this suggests is, to use an expression of Jérôme Rousseau's (1990:67), "a category defined by its center rather than its boundaries." Rousseau applies this expression to the Dayak ethnonyms "Kajang" and "Kenyah" which in his view "refer first to a core of groups with shared cultural characteristics and a common origin to which other groups are added" (1990:67). It seems to me that the concept Luangan provides us with an essentially similar case, and that we are dealing here, and perhaps more generally in Borneo, with a particular form of ethnicity, one for which, as Rousseau indicates (1990:46), the scholarly emphasis on ethnic boundaries, originating with Fredrik Barth, may be misleading. In fact, as the statements above reveal, in so far as the Luangan concept relates to boundaries at all, it is to boundaries between Dayaks and Malays. In other words, to the extent that we can speak about an exclusionary aspect of Luangan identity, this aspect is concomitant to religious identity, to being non-Muslim, which in the local context is equivalent to following the Luangan version of Kaharingan (which is associated with the central Luangan area). It is mainly with reference to behavior indicating adherence to this tradition that the term is employed, and not as often in order to mark difference with others as to express identity or continuity with the ancestral past. An exclusive tribal or ethnic Luangan identity has so far been only weakly developed by the Luangans, especially in the central parts of their territory. Interestingly, the most well articulated formulations of a Luangan tribal group entity that I have come across were provided by Luangans in downriver areas (where the concept is generally less known than in the central area), by individuals who had some acquaintance with the ethnographic literature.

Ethnic identities were apparently not very important in precolonial Borneo or among many Dayaks: up until this day they still seem to matter little. Many Dayak ethnonyms familiar to us today are, in fact, relatively recent constructs. To take some of the best known examples, none of the terms "Iban," "Land Dayak," or "Ngaju," were originally employed by these groups, at least not in the same sense that they are used now.[26] Instead, identification was primarily local, often with a particular river or river basin or some other topological feature. It seems that the above-mentioned names, like many others,

[26] "Ngaju" was formerly used only in a strictly local sense to refer to upriver as opposed to downriver Dayaks; most often lower level ethnonyms such as "Kahayan" or "Katingan" were used (Miles 1970:291-92). "Iban," which according to Freeman (1960a:160) is a borrowing from the Kayan, was not originally used as an autonym by the people today known by the term, who instead, used to be named after the rivers along which they lived (Babcock 1974:193). "Land Dayak" is a term which was created by the Brooke administration to refer to inland Dayaks in distinction to the Ibans whom they called "Sea Dayaks" (Harrisson 1950:273).

became established largely as a result of usage by Europeans and other outsiders (in some cases, like that of the Bentian, the coastal sultanates might have been involved). The ethnic division of Borneo today, at least the one reported in the literature, is largely the product of colonial and postcolonial administrators and ethnographers seeking to establish exclusive and orderly categories, and classifying smaller entities within larger totalities. In precolonial Borneo, however, it seems to have been the rule that local groups had little sense of a more general identity. Broadly encompassing ethno-linguistic categories such as "Luangan" or "Ngaju" were simply irrelevant in most situations of interaction, and they had no organizational function. Solidarities were also primarily local or regional rather than ethnic; common origin does not seem to have constituted a particularly important criterion of commonality (Babcock 1974; King 1988; Rousseau 1990).[27] What this suggests is that it would be, as has been noted by Rousseau (1990:46), misleading to approach indigenous identities in Borneo with a nation-state modeled notion of ethnicity emphasizing distinct boundaries and common origin, language and culture, even if such a notion has been gaining increasing importance in the area in the last few decades. Different conceptions of commonality, typically attributing paramount importance to locality, continue to influence identity thinking and intergroup interaction in Borneo. I will have reason to discuss Bentian conceptions of commonality on several occasions below. How such conceptions operate in a more restrictively local context will perhaps become a little clearer in the second section of this chapter, when I describe the Bentian's relationship to their local milieu.

Some Notes on Luangan Early History

Before I turn to a review of regional history, I will first say a few words about the earliest period of Luangan (and Bentian) history. Very little is known about this subject, as is true for Bornean prehistory in general. It should therefore be kept in mind that most of the information that follows is conjectural.

Above I argued that it is not necessarily the case that all Luangans originated from the central Luangan area. Where they ultimately came from must, however, remain an open question as historical sources and oral history provide no basis for such guesses.[28] When

[27] Headhunting, for instance, apparently occurred regardless of ethnicity. Victims were chosen both from without and within the group. The people of one river basin, however, usually did not take each other's heads (King 1979:4). The critical factor in determining solidarities in this respect thus seems to have been locality or geographical proximity, not ethnic identity (cf. Rousseau 1990:118).

[28] Weinstock (1983a:76-77) hypothesizes that the central Luangan area could have been the place where the Luangan ancestors first arrived in Borneo from over the seas, in a remote period when the Pasir region to the east was still below sea level. As he provides no specific evidence supporting his hypothesis (except imprecise geological data indicating the possibility of such a scenario), and as the

most Bentians arrived in their area is likewise impossible to say, although it is known that the downriver Lawa Bentians at least in part arrived from the Teweh area and settled at their present location only in the nineteenth century. We can reasonably assume, nevertheless, that the Luangan as a whole share a common ancestry with the other Barito family Dayak groups, although intermarriage and interaction could in some instances account for the linguistic and cultural similarities with these groups, as it has in the case of the Tunjung *vis-à-vis* the Luangan. If we have a look at the more remote past, the Austronesian language of the Luangan indicates a common origin with other Borneans and Indonesians from China via Taiwan and the Philippines.[29] According to prevailing prehistorical views, the Austronesians began to populate Borneo about 3000-4000 years ago (Bellwood 1985). There they presumably encountered Australoid populations who are assumed to have been living on the island since at least 35.000 B.C. Of these Australoid populations there are today no remnants (unlike in some parts of the Philippines and insular Malaysia), and it has been suggested that they gradually became assimilated into Austronesian populations who took up a hunting and gathering lifestyle and slowly moved into the interior (Sellato 1993).

Even if the Austronesians evidently knew rice cultivation already before they arrived in Borneo (Bellwood 1985; Blust 1976), it is widely accepted that rice cultivation was and could not be conducted in the interior before the advent of iron tools enabled the clearing of the rainforest (e.g. Avé & King 1986). Iron was known and extracted from iron ores on the coasts of the island at least from the beginning of the second millennium A.D. (Christie 1988), and possibly from the fifth century A.D. (Avé & King 1986:15), but the process whereby the use of iron spread inland took several centuries, and in some remote inland locations it apparently did not become available before this century (J. Nicolaisen 1976; Sellato 1996a). Hence, early inland populations presumably lived from hunting and gathering, with undomesticated sago (*Eugeissona* sp.) as their staple, as do the remaining hunters and gatherers on the island. In time, and especially during the two last centuries, these groups gradually settled and took up rice cultivation as they came

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theory fails to account for the cultural and linguistic similarities between the Luangan and the other Barito family Dayaks (who do not locate their ancestral homeland in this area), I find it too incomplete and insecurely substantiated to motivate further consideration at this stage.

[29] According to Peter Bellwood's somewhat conjectural but rather widely accepted multi-disciplinary reconstruction of Indo-Malaysian prehistory (1985:119-125,232-233), the Proto-Austronesians lived in Taiwan, about 4000 years BC (their antecedents came from mainland China). Some 3000 years BC a southward migration of the Proto-Malayo-Polynesians through the Philippines began, branching off into the Western Malayo-Polynesians and the Eastern Malayo-Polynesians at approximately 2000 BC. The former passed through Borneo, Java, and Sumatra, and finally reached the Malay peninsula (about 500 BC) and Madagascar (about AD 500, from south Borneo). The latter moved into the Lesser Sunda Islands and eastern Indonesia via Sulawesi (and were presumably strongly influenced by and intermixed with Papuan Australoids), and then into Oceania and New Zealand (AD 1-1000).

under the influence of progressively inland moving rice cultivators, and colonial and postcolonial governments (Sellato 1994). Throughout the central Borneo region it was mostly hunters and gatherers who until recently occupied the most remote interior. This does not seem to have been the case in the southeast, however (or in the northeast, in Sabah), where the population of the Meratus mountain range and its northern extension which makes up the central Luangan area appears to have been swidden cultivators for as long back in time as there is any evidence or information of it.

The Bentian and other central Luangans say that they have grown rice on their swiddens for as long as they remember, and they emphatically deny a hunting and gathering past. Even though hunters and gatherers (often known as Ut or Ot) were living on the upper Barito and some of its tributaries until recently, there is in historical times no reliable evidence of such populations from within the confines of the area occupied by the Luangans or from the rest of southeast Borneo, south of the Lahei river.[30] I have found no support for Weinstock's hypothesis that Bekumpai Malays taught the Luangan rice cultivation only a couple of centuries ago, even though this evidently holds true for some former hunting and gathering groups on the upper Barito, some of whom were related to the Ot Danum (see Weinstock 1983a:142-45; Schwaner 1968:clxv; Sellato 1986:255). Similarly, there is no evidence confirming Sellato's (1994:17) suggestion that the Bukit of South Kalimantan were hunters and gatherers, or the same suggestion by Knapen (2001:97-98) regarding the Luangan. These hypotheses aside, all other data (including all information that I have collected through interviews and all published references that I am aware of) indicate that the Dayaks in the southeast (i.e. the Luangan, Bukit, and the Ma'anyan) have been swidden cultivators since an indefinite period back in time. In the absence of contrary evidence, it seems reasonable to assume that the highly dispersed and mobile settlement pattern still to some degree maintained by some of these groups reflects a "traditional" swidden cultivation lifestyle formerly more regionally prevalent than today, rather than a hunting and gathering past.

It is, in fact, conceivable that the Luangan were swidden cultivators even before they started to grow rice. Bellwood (1985:240) suggests that tubers and fruit trees gradually replaced cereals in the farming economies of the Austronesians as they settled along equatorial latitudes in Southeast Asia. Sellato (1986:395-96; 1994:187) has proposed a theory that there existed before the introduction of rice a "tuber culture" among some Barito groups (i.e. the now non-existent Pin of the upper Mahakam, and the Siang and Ot Danum of the upper Barito). He suggests that the representatives of this culture had

[30] The southeasternmost reference to hunters and gatherers in Southeast Borneo that I have found is for the upper Lahei, a tributary of the upper Barito (see Schulte 1917:393-394). These people were apparently not Luangans, however, but a population related to the Ot Danum (see Mallinckrodt 1927:587, 589; Schulte 1917:380). A Benuaq informant also reported that some people of the upper Nyewatan (a tributary of the Pahu), on the other side of the Barito-Mahakam watershed and the provincial border, descend from hunters and gatherers.

in common an economy based on sedentary horticulture (without rice), an unstratified and loose social organization, and complex rituals including secondary mortuary treatment of the dead. All these characteristics are to a lesser or greater extent shared by the so-called Barito groups as whole, whose secondary mortuary rituals lead him to suggest that these groups were connected to "an ancient center of Hinduized culture in southern Borneo" (1994:11). This institution also leads him to infer a relationship between the Barito groups and what he (following Metcalf 1975) calls the "*nulang* arc groups," a heterogenous category of Dayaks from northern Borneo who also used to practice such rituals (Sellato 1994:189).[31] He goes on to propose that the Barito groups, together with the *nulang* arc groups, many of whom are or used to be highly or wholly dependent on other cultigens than rice, may have represented a distinct form of traditional culture, a horticulturalist lifestyle, which he distinguishes from two other traditional cultures, a hunting and gathering culture, and a culture of stratified rice farmers (represented most typically by the Kayan, who are believed to have introduced rice over extensive areas in interior Borneo).

It is impossible to say, with our present knowledge of Bornean prehistory, how widespread a horticulturalist culture of the kind described by Sellato ever was. However, the theory seriously questions the accepted view of a universal Bornean transition from hunting and gathering to rice cultivation, and it seems to me that a horticulturalist past of the kind that Sellato envisages is at least as plausible as a hunter and gatherer past in the Luangan case. The Luangans' very loose and comparatively egalitarian social organization, together with a reported preference for cassava (*jabau*) over rice among some local groups, the cultivation of stands of sago (*Metroxylon*) in swampy areas near villages and swiddens, and a relatively common complementing of rice with other cultigens toward the end of the harvest year, are as much potential evidence for a horticulturalist past as for a hunter and gatherer ancestry, and the complex ritual tradition of the Luangan, which is particularly closely associated with some of the most loosely organized Luangan subgroups (the Teweh River Luangans, the Bentian, and the Bawo), certainly supports the former possibility more than the latter. However, as already indicated, we do not really know whether or not the Luangan once were non-rice horticulturalists. In fact, we perhaps cannot even rule out the possibility of ancient rice cultivation among the Luangan. Recent archeological findings from coastal Sarawak confirming the presence of rice in Borneo from as early as 2300 B.C. (Ipoi and Bellwood 1991; Beavitt et al. 1996) or even 2990 B.C. (Doherty 1998), indicate that rice cultivation on the island is much more ancient than previously believed and possibly predates the arrival of the Austronesians. Even if research in inland sites (Doherty 1998) significantly

[31] The *nulang* arc category includes the Berawan, Kajang, Kelabit, Melanau, Lun Dayeh, and Lun Bawang.

has not discovered any rice, the results caution us against making conclusive judgments regarding Bornean prehistory at this stage. We should at least not assume a unilineal development. A significant merit of Sellato's hypothesis is that it indicates that Austronesian adaptation to the Bornean rainforest environment could have followed different paths of development in different parts of Borneo. It also points to the important fact that the Dayaks in the south and southeast differ in some significant aspects from their better-known counterparts in the central and northern parts of the island. Interestingly, the reason that they have received less scholarly attention than these Dayaks may be related to precisely some of those characteristics that set them apart from them, such as the lack of longhouse residence, a relatively restricted engagement in headhunting, a comparatively extensive interaction with coastal polities, and a seemingly undistinctive and Malay-like physical appearance and culture profile. These attributes, some of which we shall shortly attend to as I proceed to discuss the Bentian's regional connections through history, may have made these Dayaks fit the scholarly vision of what it means to be Dayak somewhat badly, and thus made them uninteresting.[32]

An Upriver Area at Several Peripheries: A Regional History of the Bentian

In the late precolonial era, before the Dutch established colonial authority in south Borneo, the Mahakam River system was part of the territory of the Sultanate of Kutai while the Barito River system fell within the boundaries of the Sultanate of Banjarmasin, both of which were located near the mouths of the respective main rivers in the two regions, and thus strategically well positioned to control exports from the regions (see Map 2). Like other so-called "traditional Southeast Asian polities" neither exerted much effective authority in the more peripheral inland areas of their territories, even though these in some cases extended all the way to the watershed which marked the boundary between them.[33] The ancestors of the Bentian possibly gradually started to recognize the authority of the Kutai Sultanate after it moved to Tenggarong in 1782 and established the institution of Erau, an annual royal ritual commemorating the founding of Tenggarong, to which upriver people were invited to participate and pay tribute. However, it was only in the mid-nineteenth century, under the reign of Sultan Aji Muhammad Sulaiman (1850-

[32] Tsing (1984:22-24) makes a similar remark with reference to the Meratus (Bukit), whose culture, she argues, may have appeared degenerated to early Western observers as a result of its having been influenced by that of the Banjars.

[33] This, at least, seems to have been the case in the area where the Bentian live. On the Mahakam, on the other hand, where the Sultan of Kutai exerted his principal influence, the jurisdiction officially only reached Gunung Sendawar, a hill located some distance upriver from Melak (the present-day capital of *kabupaten* West-Kutai) (see e.g. Tromp 1890:729-30; Wortmann 1971a:51-52).

1899), that the process of integration became more significant, when Bentian leaders (*manti*) more regularly started to visit the Sultan and, in connection with these visits, received honorific titles such as *Temanggung*, *Mangku*, and *Singa*. These titles, usually substantiated by a letter (*surat*) and an emblem (*tanda pangkat, seluit*) depicting the Kutai coat of arms, authorized their holders to govern and, ideally, integrate their followers, who until then had mainly been living in dispersed farmhouses on their swidden fields, occasionally gathering in small, isolated "extended family houses" (*lou*), which themselves were often located far apart from each other and any larger rivers. At about the same time trade with the Kutainese expanded and more serious efforts of the sultanate to integrate and relocate the dispersed population at the fringes of its territory through special envoys ordering them to build villages and move downstream, became increasingly common. The first villages in the Bentian area were established in the latter half of the nineteenth century, in a period which Bentians remember as turbulent.

As a result of several factors — the Bentian's comparatively dispersed settlement pattern, the absence of navigable rivers in much of their area, as well as the general remoteness of the area (before the time of motorized transportation, the journey by canoe to Tenggarong took about a week, downstream, and about twice that time, upstream) — the Bentian became integrated with the sultanate relatively late. They had a reputation as an independent and even dangerous people, not subordinated to Kutai authority. In 1903, the Dutch *controleur* C. S. Knappert, who conducted a survey of Kutai and visited the Bentian, claimed that they regarded themselves as much more autonomous than the Benuaq, and paid very little respect to the sultan, with only a few of their leaders infrequently visiting Tenggarong (1905:626). Seventy-five years before that, in 1828, the British traveler-adventurer John Dalton was told by locals in Muara Pahu (a large village at the mouth of the Pahu River, at that time the last upriver outpost of the sultan), that the road to Banjarmasin, leading through Bentian territory, was "very dangerous, ... the very worst part of Diak [Dayak] country" (Dalton [1831a]:E4-E5). Similar views are echoed in comments about the Bentian and neighboring Dayaks recorded fifty years later by the Norwegian traveler Carl Bock, who in 1879 traveled through the area in the company of the sultan and a group of Buginese soldiers. Spending the night at the mouth of the Anan River, he remarked that "the Dyaks of the surrounding district are noted, even among the Dyaks, for their ferocity" ([1881]:146). He also recounted a report that one of the sultan's men had been "killed by natives" just prior to his arrival at the spot ([1881]:146), and he described Dilang Puti, the present-day subdistrict capital, situated a day's travel downriver from his campsite, as being at "the furthest extremity" of the sultan's dominions ([1881]:143).

Considering that the Bentian were then mostly living in small, dispersed and rather loosely organized groups, and according to their own report practiced almost no offensive warfare and very little headhunting, at least in comparison with the more populous and

stratified Dayak groups of the upper Mahakam who were known to carry out devastating raids within and beyond Kutai, such statements should probably read primarily as indications of the limited extent of contact between downriver people and Bentians at the time, and perhaps also of the fact that their area was located at the very margins of Kutai territory, bordering enemy territory. However, such statements certainly also reflected resistance on the Bentians' part, although this was generally of a rather passive kind, contrary to what is reported above. There was considerable reluctance among the Bentians to move downstream and concentrate, and present-day Bentians also admit that their ancestors long remained what they today, appropriating a downstream concept, call "wild" (*liar*, I.). This condition was not only a result of their location, but also one of choice. In fact, there were Dayaks (the ancestors of those to whom Weinstock refers as the "Purei subgroup of Luangan") even further upstream, in fact, at the other side of the watershed and outside of Kutai, who nevertheless recognized the authority of the Sultan of Kutai and "payed him a yearly tribute" (Schwaner 1853:118). Like some of the Bentian's downriver neighbors, such Dayaks were referred to by Bentians as *suaka* (subordinated, tributary). As elsewhere in Borneo at the time, an important distinction was thus made between "tribute paying Dayaks," and "free Dayaks" (Avé & King 1986:25), and the Bentian was — at least in southeast Borneo — among those who remained in the latter category the longest.

An important factor which might also have slowed Bentian integration into the Kutai Sultanate is the relative proximity of the Bentian area to the Teweh River (see Map 2). At least from the early nineteenth century onwards there were Bentians conducting trade with Bekumpai Malays resident in the upper Teweh. The Dutch explorer Schwaner (1853:120), who traveled through the Bentian area in 1847, probably overstated the point somewhat when he described the Bentian as "born traders," and his information (1853: 121) that they brought products procured from the Bekumpai down the Lawa River and on to Muara Pahu on the Mahakam, "eight days away," is not confirmed by Bentians today. Nevertheless, his observations indicate that regular trade took place between Bentians and Bekumpais (an additional factor which might have contributed to averse downriver Kutai attitudes toward the Bentian), the latter supplying salt, tobacco, cloth (colored and uncolored), dyes, kitchen utensils, Chinese jars, other ceramics, iron, lead, rifles, and gunpowder in exchange for honey, beeswax (probably also beeswax candles), mats (most likely rattan mats), and locally produced weapons (swords or jungle knives) and clothes (Schwaner 1853:120). This list of products given by Schwaner was probably not complete, at least not with regard to products provided by the Bentian, who remember various sorts of resin and rattan as their most important trade goods.

Despite the apparent fact that they never recognized themselves as part of the Banjarmasin Sultanate, the proximity of the Teweh River meant that the Bentian were subjected to much influence from that area. In fact, their peripheral position at the

Mahakam-Barito watershed (which facilitated a relatively high degree of political autonomy) exposed them to indirect influence from three coastal centers: the Kutai, Banjar, and Pasir sultanates, the last-mentioned of which was located to the southeast, wedged in between the Banjar and Kutai sultanates, and generally regarded as a region of disorder throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century. A couple of important routes traversing the Bentian area and connecting these coastal centers with each other brought the Bentian in contact with various people from various directions (among the more notable, the Sultan of Kutai a few times traveled through). With regard to trade, they not only exchanged products with the Bekumpai on the Teweh River, but also with itinerant Kutai Malays and Buginese, who brought their goods upriver to the Bentian, as well as with inland Pasir Dayaks or Islamized Pasirese, whom the Bentian visited in their region.

The Bentian's peripheral location did thus not entail that they were isolated, although their trade contacts and the important role of trade in their society should not lead us to exaggerate the frequency or intensity of most Bentian individuals' contacts with other peoples at that time. In the nineteenth century, contacts between Bentians, on the one hand, and other Dayaks and Malays, on the other, consisted mainly of trade contacts or formalized exchange visits carried out by large groups of men (*roing*). Fear of headhunting or raids from other Dayaks, especially the Pari from the upper Mahakam, who were an endemic problem for Bentians and Teweh River Luangans at this time, effectively kept individual travel and the movement of women at a minimum, and in many communities restricted marriage to within one's own community or the closest neighboring communities. I shall return to discuss the implications of this important condition of restricted mobility later, in Chapter 3. Before that I will first try to provide an indirect understanding of Bentian history (on which there exists, as already remarked, few direct references) through a regional history focused on three coastal regions of southeast Borneo (which also are not very well known in a comparative perspective). I will concentrate on the influence of these regions on the Bentian, whose position between them is crucial for an understanding of the Bentians' past and present predicament. In this respect the Bentian may be said to share an essential feature with the peoples of the Teweh River area, which used to be a region of considerable economic significance, according to Schwaner precisely because of its intermediary location between these coastal regions (1853:116). The Teweh River itself has also been an important source of influence on the Bentian as it has been with regards to other Luangans, and it may, as we have seen, be regarded as a center in its own right, a kind of inland center. However, not all of its importance for the Bentian arises from the fact that it is regarded as the area from where Luangan tradition originated. Part of it results from the fact that influence on the Bentian from the Barito (and Pasir) direction mainly reached them by way of this river. I will consider those aspects of Teweh influence mainly in connection with

discussing the Barito region. Apart from describing the influence of the sultanates, I will also account for the impact of the Dutch, which itself, at least in Kutai, was for a long time mostly indirect, mediated by the sultanates or some segments of their populations. In accounting for all these "external" influences I will go back to early historical times. I will begin with the Kutai sultanate and describe this kingdom somewhat more thoroughly than the others, as it is the oldest and the one which has had the greatest influence on the Bentian, even if perhaps not on the Luangan as a whole.

The Sultanate of Kutai[34]

The Kutai kingdom is regarded as one of the oldest polities in Indonesia. Sanskrit inscriptions in Pallawa script from about A.D. 400 acknowledge the generosity toward Brahmins of King Mulawarman, whose father was the founder of the royal dynasty of a kingdom known as Kutai Martapura, assumed to be located at Muara Kaman, some distance upstream from Tenggarong on the Mahakam River (Wortmann 1971a). These inscriptions put the origin of this kingdom further back than what is documented for any other polity in the region, at the same time as they indicate very early Indic influence in East Kalimantan, predating even that recorded for Java. The origin of the founders of Kutai Martapura is unknown but it is told that it maintained relations with the famous Hindu-Javanese kingdom of Majapahit, or Mataram, another contemporary Hindu-Javanese polity (Boyce 1986:C3). Kutai Martapura remained Hindu until its fall in the early sixteenth century when it became annexed by another Kutainese kingdom, Kutai Kartanegara.

It is with the first king of Kutai Kartanegara, Aji Batara Dewa Agung Sakti (who reputedly descended from heaven, an origin also shared by many Bentian and other Luangan subgroup founders), that the "*Salasila Kutai*," the genealogy of the Sultanate of Kutai, begins. Kutai Kartanegara emerged as a trade center in the early fourteenth century in the Mahakam delta. It is assumed that its founders were Hindu-Javanese and thus that this kingdom was Hindu from the start. It has been suggested that it was founded by refugees from the Singasari kingdom in Java whose fall concurred with the rise of Majapahit, and that the name of the kingdom, "Kutai Kartanegara," commemorated the Singasari king, Kertanegara. Its first capital was Kutai Lama, located downstream from present-day Samarinda. Kutai Kartanegara remained Hindu until some time around the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth century when its population rapidly converted to Islam introduced by religious teachers who previously had introduced Islam

[34] Principal sources for this subchapter and the next were: Black 1985, Boyce 1986, *Dari Swapraja* 1979, Knappert 1905, Tromp 1888, 1889, Wortmann 1971a, 1971b.

to Sulawesi. It thus coexisted with Kutai Martapura for several centuries until the expansionist reign of Sultan Pangeran Sinum Panji Mendapa (1605-1637), when a war broke out, leading to Kutai Martapura's incorporation in Kutai Kartanegara. It was also during this sultan's rule that the original *Salasila Kutai* was written, and regular contacts with the Bugis of Sulawesi (with whom several subsequent sultans intermarried), were initiated (Amin 1996; Boyce 1986).

It is unclear what or how much influence these early East Kalimantan Hindu Kingdoms had on the Bentian's ancestors. Various aspects of inland religious tradition suggest the possibility of Hindu or Javanese influence, as may certain titles for leaders and such traditions as use of head cloths (*laung*) (see Witkamp 1928:425). Stone figures showing resemblance to Indic religious sculpture and likely dating back to pre-Islamic times have also recently been found in caves of the Bentian area (Edmund Grundner, personal communication, 2002), indicating the possibility of early cultural influence from the coasts. It may be, however, that such possible Hindu influences were as much, if not more, the result of later interaction with the Kutai sultanate, which despite its formal Muslim status retained many Hindu elements in its royal rituals and court culture. The Bentian's ancestors might not have had any direct contacts with these kingdoms, although some other Dayak groups certainly did. According to well-known Kutai mythology, the Tunjung established a marital alliance with Kutai Kartanegara when Puncen Karena, the son of a Tunjung leader, married Dewa Putri, the sister of Maharaja Sultan, a Kartanegara sultan who reigned around the mid-fifteenth century (later, a daughter of Puncen Karena's great-grandchild married the Sultan Aji Di Langgar and together with him begot the famous Sultan Pangeran Sinum Panji Mendapa, thus making possible the tracing of the ancestry of the sultanate back to the Tunjung). Mythology also has it that the population of two kingdoms at Kota Bangun and Muara Pahu,[35] reportedly annexed together with Kutai Martapura, were partly indigenous, mixed with Hindu-Javanese, which seems to have been the case also with the kingdom of Pasir, which is of approximately the same age as Kutai Kartanegara, and which was visited together with Kutai in 1635 by the Dutchman Gerrit Thomassen Pool, the first European to visit the east coast. According to Tunjung and Benuaq oral history, some of their ancestors also used to live on the lower Mahakam before they later moved upriver, away from the Muslims. A similar situation prevailed on the lower Barito, where Banjar Malay expansion occasioned the Ma'anyan Dayaks to move upriver (Hudson 1967b:15), and supposedly also elsewhere in Borneo.

Kutai Kartanegara's interaction with inland peoples probably became more intense in the seventeenth century after it had converted to Islam and seized the above-mentioned kingdoms. This is also a time much celebrated by present-day Kutainese, inclined to revive the past glory of the sultanate. In this period Sultan Pangeran Sinum Panji

[35] The population of the kingdom at Muara Pahu was likely Luangan of the Pahu subgroup.

Mendapa is said to have established the legal code of the Sultanate, the *Beradja Nanti* and *Panji Selaten* laws, which were written in Kutai Malay, the language spoken by the Islamized Kutainese. The central concept of these Kutai books of law was *adat*, an originally Arabic word, in Indonesia variously designating "law," "customary law," "propriety" and "tradition," which has long been used all over the country, among inland and non-Muslim people as well as among coastal and Muslim groups, and which today is of central importance for conceptions of self-identity among all Indonesian ethnic groups, particularly among smaller minorities not adhering to one of the world religions. The regulations in the law books recognized a wide range of different forms of *adat*, including, most interestingly, the customary law (*adat yang teradat*) of inland peoples, of which it was said that it was to be respected in their areas (Widjono 1991, referred to in Fried 1995:36). The sultanate thus acknowledged the right — and simultaneously indicated the obligation — of inland Dayak leaders to administrate their own *adat* within their own local domains. Hence it established a model and system of governance which gradually came to influence the inland population, among whom the concept of *adat* in time gained central significance, both as a designation for customary law, and as one for custom and religious tradition.

Another example of the influence of the Kutai Sultanate which probably reached the inland peoples at about the same time as the concept of *adat* is the institution of *manti*ship. Bentians say that "*manti*," unlike the above-mentioned titles which were granted to their leaders at a later stage, is an indigenous term, although it seems likely that it was originally adopted as a result of outside influence. Cognates of the word (e.g. *mantri*, *menteri*) are widespread in Indonesian societies, and the Kutai books of law prescribed, along with the *adat* system, an administrative order according to which *menteri* was a designation for office holders charged with the task of administering *adat*. In addition, the same term was also used by high-ranking counsellors of the sultan, so it seems reasonable to assume that the term and the institution gradually spread inland — in a process assumingly involving both emulation and imposition — as the interaction of inland peoples with the sultanate (and the authority of the latter) increased. Among the Bentian the institution was somewhat transformed (and the term domesticated), and "*manti*" became a generic designation for the usually self-appointed elders who acted as the heads of extended families or housegroups. These *manti* performed tasks perceived as concerned with the application of *adat*-law (i.e. adjudications in hearings and litigations), but they did not yet possess any official or more widespread authority, and their functions pertained as much or more to so-called domestic (i.e. family) affairs than to community leadership. It is important to note, therefore, that the term *manti* is different from the individual titles which were granted by the sultan to some (but not all) Bentian *manti* from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, as these titles — recognized by Bentians as exogenous — significantly transformed the *manti* institution and the societies

concerned by increasing the status of the former and the degree of hierarchy in the latter. Similar developments occurred in the neighboring sultanates of Banjarmasin and Pasir, where the *adat* institution was introduced at about the same time, and similar titles later also became used by local leaders.

Together with *adat* and *manti*ship, Bentians and other interior Borneans at this time also obtained something more concrete from the coast, namely, the so-called "traditional valuables" (ceramic jars and plates, gongs and other brass and iron items) which were, in fact, a prerequisite for *adat*-law — which is largely what Fried (1995:95), influenced by an indigenous account (Titus Pantir 1990), has called "a law of fines," based on the exchange of such objects — and thereby indirectly also for the *manti* institution. These valuables had been obtained by some interior peoples for a very long time, but they became more extensively available in this period as a result of an increasing trade following in the footsteps of the inland expansion of the Islamized sultanates. Another institution conceivably evolving at about the same time was what Bentians call *roing,* formal exchange expeditions whereby interior communities traded and developed relations with particular other interior communities. It is probable that residence in longhouses (*lou*), which were led by a *manti*, also became more common among Luangans at this time, as may have been the case with slavery too, since slaves, who are said to have been owned by the *manti*, were principally obtained through *roing,* or as the result of accumulated debt (making debtors who were unable to pay their debts into debt slaves).

One important factor which strongly contributed to increasing coastal-interior interaction in Kutai (and Pasir) at this time was the presence of the Bugis. Especially from the late seventeenth century, after a confederation between the kings of Kutai, Pasir and Bone in Sulawesi in 1686, the Bugis, largely as a result of internal conflicts, started to migrate into eastern Kalimantan in large numbers, and from that time on, they held an important role in the trade and politics of the east coast for several centuries (Tromp 1887). Accomplished seafarers, controlling sea traffic in the southern part of the Makassar straits, they controlled the export trade from Kutai and the rest of southeast Borneo, their ships sailing to the ports of Makassar, Surabaya, Johore and Singapore (Lindblad 1988:10). The Bugis also made up most of the armed forces in Kutai, and it was on their advice that the capital was moved to Tenggarong in 1782, after already having been moved upriver once, from Kutai Lama to Pemarangan, in 1732 (Boyce 1986:C7). The objective of these moves was to relocate the capital away from pirate activity at the mouth of the Mahakam, carried out by pirates from the Sulu archipelago in the southern Philippines, who in their turn controlled trade in the northern Makassar strait and were the rivals of the Bugis. It was also the Bugis who in 1730 founded Samarinda, the present-day provincial capital, and a large portion of the population on the east coast is still Buginese. However, the Bugis lost their formerly dominant trading

position toward the end of the nineteenth century as a combined result of increasingly effective Dutch control and increasing Chinese trading activity, which was favored by the Dutch over that of the Buginese because of Dutch anti-Muslim sentiments which were widespread in the colonial administration (Lindblad 1988:11).

A demand on inland peoples to produce forest products for the export market gradually increased after the arrival of the Bugis. By the early nineteenth century a busy trade between Kutai and Singapore had developed, with rattan, gutta-percha and beeswax among the principal exports, and cotton, textiles and arms among the imports (Wortmann 1971a:6, cf. Dalton [1831b]). It is probable that it was an increased demand of rattan for export which in this period prompted the sultan to request tribute from the Bentian and other upriver peoples in Kutai. At this time, the Dutch presence in the area was still virtually nonexistent (Irwin 1955:154). The treaty established by Gerrit Thomassen Pool had been inconsequential and despite the fact that the Sultanate of Banjarmasin twice, in 1787 and 1817, ceded Pasir and Kutai, over which it had claimed supremacy, to the Dutch, these acts were of little importance for the later sultanates. If anything, they seem to have confirmed rather than undermined their authority by making it official (Black 1985:286). Even after 1844, when the Sultan of Kutai was forced to sign a treaty recognizing Dutch sovereignty after an attack by the Dutch against Tenggarong, Kutai still remained very independent in practical terms, even though the Dutch presence in Kalimantan, because of fear of English claims to the area, now became somewhat more pronounced, and an assistant resident was instituted in Samarinda a few years later, becoming stationed in Banjarmasin.[36]

It is difficult to determine exactly how extensive or restricted the Kutai-Bentian interaction used to be at this time, or how far back in time it ultimately goes, as there is almost no historical documentation of these contacts. It seems likely, however, on the basis of Bentian oral history, that it did not become very important before the early or mid-nineteenth century, even if some amount of trade (in rattan, beeswax candles and resins) had been conducted with Kutainese Malays and Buginese before that (as with Bekumpais). The earliest historically determinable event indicating Kutai-Bentian contact remembered by Bentians is a request for tribute in the form of rattan canes made to them and other upriver Dayak peoples by Sultan Muhammad Muslihuddin, also known as the Rose Water Sultan (Fried 1995:36). As Muslihuddin did not reign before 1780 (when he left Sulawesi where he was born, his father having married a Buginese noble woman) it seems reasonable to assume that this request was made in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, certainly before 1816, when Muslihuddin died (Boyce 1986:C7; Tromp 1888:4). According to Bentian information obtained by Stephanie Fried

[36] In 1812, the Sultan of Banjarmasin had actually ceded both his own sultanate and those of the east coast to the British. The British presence in Kalimantan at this time remained weak, however, and limited mainly to some rather uncoordinated private business enterprises.

(1995:10), it was this request which prompted the commencement of Bentian large-scale rattan cultivation, which gradually was to gain a central importance in their generally subsistence-oriented swidden economy. However, it was probably not before the late nineteenth century that rattan (of the *sega* and *woyung* species) became commonly cultivated throughout the Bentian area, even if wild rattan (e.g. *kehes*) was collected and sold before that. In Dilang Puti, the present-day subdistrict capital of Bentian Besar, comprehensive rattan cultivation started in the first or second decade of the twentieth century, when Raden Sokma, the district chief (*kiai*) in office at the time, ordered the leader of the village, who held the title of regional head of customary law (*kepala adat besar*), to see to it that rattan was cultivated on every swidden field.

The policy of the Kutai Sultanate toward the interior became significantly more active under the reign of Sultan Aji Muhammad Sulaiman (1850-1899). Then the royal Erau ritual in Tenggarong began to be arranged yearly and its scope widened as an increasing number of remote upriver peoples were invited to participate. As well as distributing titles to Dayak (and other) leaders recognizing his authority, the sultan on these occasions also gave them small amounts of red and yellow rice which were stored by the leaders in special yellow pouches indicating their status and used in village rituals, replicating the festivities in the royal capital. In 1872, the sultan imposed a kind of headtax on his subjects (Tromp 1889:300). Through special envoys sent upriver he gradually started to mount pressure on dispersed and remote Dayak populations such as the Bentian, not yet living in "proper villages," to integrate and move downriver to more accessible locations. At the same time, inland trade increased significantly. In the 1880s Buginese traders were a common sight in many parts of interior Kutai. One example of influence on Dayak culture originating from interaction with these traders is gambling (see Tromp 1889:299), which since then has been an important and costly pastime among Kutainese Dayaks, particularly, in the case of the Bentian, and the Benuaq and Tunjung even more so, during secondary mortuary rituals. Yet another instance of a heightened presence of downriver people in the Bentian area in the latter part of the nineteenth century were the troops of the sultan who assisted the Dutch in the Banjarmasin war.

The Dutch in Kutai

Unlike the Sultanate of Banjarmasin which became a Dutch "direct rule territory" (*direct gebied*) in 1860, and which lost most of its original dominions to the Dutch by the early nineteenth century (e.g see Knapen 2001), the Kutai Sultanate retained, within the East Indies administration, the status of a semi-independent *landschap*, and thereby also, effective self-control in most administrative matters until the early twentieth century. This meant that Bentians until then regarded Kutai and the Makaham River area as part

of "the Sultanate," while they considered the region at the other side of the watershed, the area which today constitutes the province of Central Kalimantan, as belonging to the Dutch. Even after 1909, when the other sultanates in Kalimantan were forced to accept the "short declarations" (*Korte Verklaringen*), renouncing their semi-autonomous status and transferring most of their remaining authority to the Dutch, Kutai was spared (Black 1985:288). In fact, Kutai remained a "special region" (*swapraja*) even after Indonesian independence, until 1957, and the sultanate as an institution was not abolished until 1960 when Kutai became a *kabupaten* (regency) (Magenda 1991:45; *Dari Swapraja* 1979).

Throughout the nineteenth century the Dutch had employed a deliberate non-interference policy *vis-à-vis* Kutai (Black 1985:286-87). Even if the sultanate had to accept Dutch sovereignty and it lost much of its economic control as the Dutch began to control the export trade in the latter half of the century, the sultan still retained the right to impose certain taxes and in addition, he received a considerable income from the Dutch in compensation for surrendering the sovereignty of his kingdom. As a result of this, the sultanate remained wealthy and it continued to wield administrative control in its area. It was able to do so largely as a result of proving itself loyal to the Dutch and providing them with manpower in the Banjarmasin war and its aftermath. Because of his "skilful balancing act in his relations with the Dutch," Sultan Aji Muhammad Sulaiman was able not only to sustain prosperity and internal administrative control, but also gain a more stable authority *vis-à-vis* Buginese and Banjarese influences at his court (Black 1985:288).

From the very beginning of the 20th century, however, the Dutch began to impose greater control in Kutai, both political and economic. This was the result of generally more assertive Dutch policies in the "Outer Islands," associated with their so-called "ethical policy," but also of their increasing economic interest in the natural resources of the area: in 1888, the first Dutch coal mines in Kutai had been opened, and in the 1890s, oil was discovered in Balikpapan and other locations along the coast. In 1900, the sultan lost his right to impose taxes, including, most importantly, the Mahakam River tax and the taxes on salt, opium, and gambling (Wortmann 1971b:52). This virtually ended the already weakened economic dominance of the sultanate over its inhabitants, even if the sultan continued to receive a considerable income from the Dutch in the form of oil royalties and in compensation for the district of Upper Mahakam, which became a direct rule area in 1907. This income was large enough to secure the continuing prosperity of the royal family who at this time was one of the richest in the archipelago; during the early part of the reign of Sultan Parikesit (1910-1959), known for his extravagance in spending his wealth (see e.g Krohn 1927:108-123), the sultanate loaned money to other sultanates and even to the Dutch East Indies government in Jakarta (Magenda 1991:18). Nevertheless, the changes imposed by the Dutch at this time were profound, and they also affected the political authority of the sultanate. In 1902, the administration of Kutai was

reorganized, although it remained staffed mainly with Kutai aristocrats. As elsewhere in Kalimantan, a large portion of the administrative personnel of the Dutch in Kutai were indigenous, which meant that the Bentian came to have very little direct contact with the Dutch (Lindblad 1988:133).

After 1900, the sultan continued to govern the Dayaks through what became known as "*adat* leaders" or "heads of customary law" (*pengurus, kepala adat*), that is, local leaders to whom he granted individual titles, although at this time "village heads" (*petinggi,* later *kepala desa*) were increasingly commonly appointed, the status of whom, among the Bentian, was long subordinate (and often still is, at least in some respects) to that of the *adat* heads, in comparison with whom the village heads were to a higher degree associated with the government than the people. In time, however, the *adat* heads were replaced as the officially leading village authorities by the village heads, who were entitled to receive 8 percent of the so-called "head tax" (*uang kepala*, M.) that was gathered on Dutch initiative and imposed on every household head (Wortmann 1971b:54). It was in the three first decades of the twentieth century that most of the present-day villages in the Bentian area were established (three had been established before 1900), and Dutch influence, recognized as such, became more systematically apparent. Apart from the head tax, this influence was above all manifested through occasional visits by the Dutch *controleurs* (district officers) or their local assistants, the indigenous *kiai*, based in Muara Pahu, who together with the village heads were instrumental in establishing Bentian residence in villages.

Among the few things associated with the Dutch by Bentians today are the small rest houses (*pasanggrahan* I, *senkerahen*) which were built in every village, mainly in order to accommodate the occasional visiting government official. Other constructions were the cement pillars which, with Bentian assistance, were raised on many of the mountaintops in the area; the function of these objects (which were used for cartography, enabling the measuring of distance) was the subject of much curiosity and became something of a symbol of Dutch rule, destroyed after Indonesian independence. The Dutch also ordered the Bentian to clear a few wide footpaths leading through their area yearly. Unlike in some other areas, however, there were no larger Dutch development projects requiring extensive local labor carried out among the Bentian (a channel built to shorten the course of the Lawa River is the most notable exception). Taxation was probably the most burdensome of the demands of the Dutch; however, most Bentians were able to obtain the sums required relatively easily by selling rattan to traders, or else, to evade payment altogether.

The Dutch also put an end to headhunting and forbade slavery, both of which had been practiced to some degree by most Dayaks, even if apparently only to a rather limited extent among many Dayak groups in the southeast, including the Bentian. These measures were partly imposed before the twentieth century by the sultanate, especially

with respect to headhunting (Tromp 1889:293). In the Barito area this practice was largely curtailed by the 1830s. In much of southern Borneo headhunting came to an ultimate end with the famous pan-Dayak peace meeting that was arranged on Dutch initiative in Tumbang Anoi on the upper Kahayan River in 1884. However, in many parts of Kutai it continued into the early twentieth century. The Bentian were subjected to headhunting attacks by upper Mahaham Dayaks until the late nineteenth century, and some Bentians apparently did, albeit reportedly very infrequently, carry out small-scale revenge or other raids themselves. The Dutch begun to employ a stricter policy with regards to slavery in the late nineteenth century; the practice became officially outlawed in Kutai in 1892 (Black 1985:287). Their efforts did not at first affect the system of slavery among the inland Dayak population as much as they were directed against the extensive slave trading which took place along the coast and which was largely in the hands of Bugis and Sulu pirates (some of whom were connected to the coastal sultanates).[37] With regards to Dayak slavery, a system of gradual abolishment was applied, and several decades passed before it was completely abandoned.[38] The Bentian are today highly reluctant to discuss this long neglected and much condemned practice, but it is acknowledged that some wealthy *manti* owned small numbers of debt slaves (*ripen*) or slaves purchased from other communities (*batang ulun*) until some point in the early twentieth century.

The Dutch may generally be regarded as having had a somewhat paternalistic attitude toward the Dayaks; protecting them from Muslim influence was an objective of high priority. In attempting to fulfil this objective and realizing their "ethical policy," missionary work was an important measure. Perhaps as a result of their low population and their relative remoteness, the Bentian were not subjected to missionary measures before the 1930s. Then a Chinese preacher, Tuan Linn, representing an American Protestant organization, in short time converted two Bentian villages (and two upper Teweh villages) which have remained Christian after that. Later on, efforts, mostly by Indonesian missionaries, at proselytizing other Bentians have been implemented with varying degrees of success; today half of the Bentian population is Christian, and most active Christians live in the two villages converted in the 1930s. In a comparative perspective, it may be noted, this means an exceptionally low degree of conversion; the

[37] There may have been important connections between inland and coastal slavery. The inland population provided slaves for the coastal slave trade at least periodically and it appears that the sultanates played an important role as intermediaries in this trade (see Dalton [1831a]:E4). It is also likely that the institution of slavery in inland southeast Borneo largely developed in connection with the coastal, Bugis-controlled slave trade networks; inland tributary relations with the sultanates, at any rate, certainly contributed to the importance of inland slavery by creating conditions favoring the development of intracommunity relations of debt and dependence.

[38] At first, it was not demanded that slaves were released immediately, but after a transitional period of up to eight years (see Black 1985:287).

Bentian, like the Luangan as a whole (for whom a similar degree of conversion possibly also applies) may in fact be one of the least Christianized of all the Dayaks, even as compared with the other Barito groups.[39]

Even if the Dutch generally interfered rather little in Bentian lives, they were still figures of authority and sometimes feared; like the Japanese who occupied Borneo during the Second World War they are said to have used a stick to hit people who did not obey their orders. In the Bentian case, however, it seems that most of the resentment against the Dutch expressed today reflects post-independence propaganda (or influence from their Teweh River neighbors) rather than their own colonial experience. The impact of Dutch rule and the relationship of the Dutch to the Dayaks obviously varied a lot with each region. In the former Sultanate of Banjarmasin and in the Teweh area, the influence of the Dutch was both greater and established much earlier than in Kutai.

Recurrent epidemics such as smallpox and cholera in Kutai and elsewhere in Borneo, although perhaps not caused by the Dutch but certainly resulting from downstream contacts in general, had a major impact upon the Bentians and Luangans. According to oral history, outbreaks of unidentified epidemics (*repa*) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century severely decimated the population of many Bentian and other Luangan communities. As a consequence, it is commonly remarked today, the present population of these communities is much smaller than it would otherwise have been. The importance of epidemics for notions of the past among these upriver peoples cannot be underestimated, and like intergroup warfare and headhunting, epidemics have probably contributed to the spirit of general mistrust which characterizes Bentian attitudes toward downriver peoples, and possibly also, to some degree, to the persistence of their dispersed settlement pattern. When Bentian and other Luangan communities were hit by a epidemic, their members would typically attempt to avoid getting infected by staying out on their swidden fields for as long as it lasted.

A History of the Barito Region

Before the arrival of the Dutch, the Sultanate of Banjarmasin was the principal power in the Barito region. Its predecessor, the so-called Negara kingdom, was probably founded by Gujarati Indians in the early 14th century, although its population was mostly made up of a mixture of local Dayaks and Malays from Sumatra who had moved into the area sometime in the first millennium A.D. (Ras 1968:196). However, Negara had intensive

[39] Despite fame for their *tiwah* secondary mortuary ceremonies and for their success in establishing Hindu Kaharingan as an *agama*, the overwhelming majority of the Ngaju are Christians. Among the Ma'anyan, only a very small percentage remain Kaharingan. Among the Ot Danum, the number of Kaharingans is higher, possibly equaling or surpassing that of the Luangan.

contacts with Java from early on, which is evident by traces of influence in Banjarese (which is a distinct Malay language), and it is believed that its court was modeled on that of the kingdom of Majapahit, when a Majapahit prince succeeded the founder king (Ras 1968:62; Hudson 1967b:16). A couple of centuries later, in the mid-sixteenth century, as a result of a conflict regarding succession, the capital of the kingdom was moved from its location in the fertile Hulu Sungai plains downstream to Banjarmasin. Because the winning party had requested military help from the Islamic kingdom of Demak (the most powerful polity on Java after the fall of Majapahit in 1528), the new kingdom converted to Islam and became a sultanate. The relocation of the main port of the kingdom from Marabahan (the principal domicile of the Bekumpai, who at that time were still Dayaks) to Banjarmasin, located closer to the sea (see Map 2), was also in response to the demands of increasing trade with the Chinese and Portugese (Hudson 1967b:23). Among the goods exported were various forest products and pepper initially supplied mainly by Dayaks, and cultivated on their swiddens in the Hulu Sungai area until the seventeenth century, when they were no longer able to meet the increasing export demands on this crop, and inland-moving Banjarese, practicing sedentary pepper cultivation, forced them to move upriver from the fertile areas where they had until then resided (Hudson 1967b:15). Forest products had probably been exported from southeast Borneo for a very long time, and it has even been suggested that the name "Tanjung Pura" mentioned in early Chinese sources from the seventh century A.D. was the name of the capital of the early colony of the Sumatran Malays who later founded Negara (Ras 1968:188-91).

The Dutch established themselves earlier in the Banjarmasin area than on the east coast. The Dutch East-India Company (VOC) was granted rights to export pepper as early as 1638, although it was not before the mid-eighteenth century that they were able to develop a relatively effective trade monopoly and establish residence in the area (Lindblad 1988:8-9). In 1787 Sultan Nata of the Banjarmasin Sultanate ceded his kingdom to the Dutch (along with Kutai and Pasir). However, Dutch control in the area did not immediately take effect but, on the contrary, decreased while the Sultanate temporarily regained most of its power, a development occasioned by, among other things, the decline of the VOC (Lindblad 1988:8-9). As in Kutai, increasing British interest in Kalimantan in the early nineteenth century gradually induced a more active Dutch response. Through treaties in 1817 and 1826 the Dutch regained sovereignty over the area. In 1840, the Dutch trading company *Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij* (NHM) opened a branch in Banjarmasin (Lindblad 1988:11). In comparison to Kutai, the Dutch generally employed a much more active policy in this region, which on account of its fertile lands and comparatively high population density was regarded as especially valuable. In 1859, Dutch interference in succession affairs through support for a candidate not publicly endorsed led to the Banjarmasin war (1859-63). In 1860 the sultanate became a direct rule area and it did not re-establish itself after the war; in 1886

it was officially dissolved. Dutch control and influence continued to increase, although it took some time before the Dutch established themselves in the upper Barito area, in the district known as "Upper Dusun," of which the Teweh River was also part.

With regards to the history of that part of the Barito region, the aftermath of the Banjarmasin war was to prove as important as the war itself. The reason was that the supporters of the candidate for sultan were sidetracked by the Dutch and withdrew to this area. At first the Dutch largely left them alone, but in the 1880s escalating insurgency activities demanded intervention. Despite their efforts, however, the Dutch did not succeed in catching the leader and pretender to the throne, and so the area remained unsafe through the rest of the century until 1905 when especially powerful military operations were initiated (Lindblad 1988:122). During this volatile period, troops of the Sultan of Kutai assisted the Dutch, while Banjar rebels, allied with Bekumpais and Dayaks, attacked government posts or made raids into Kutai (Surapati, the Islamized leader of the Siang Dayaks on the upper Barito was one of the principal opposition figures). Dayaks from the upper Mahakam, allying with the Sultan of Kutai, were also involved, attacking the inhabitants in the Dusun lands, whom they had formerly subjected to headhunting raids.

As a result of the war and the subsequent dissolution of the Banjar Sultanate in 1886, there was also a considerable influx of Banjarese to Kutai where, in time, they largely came to replace the Kutainese and the Bugis in the trading sector, especially inland, as well as make up a large proportion of the total population in the area (Magenda 1991:3). Some rebels and other Banjarese also moved to the Teweh River where they, together with Bekumpai traders who had been settling there since at least the early eighteenth century, contributed to a diffusion of anti-Dutch sentiments and Islamic influence in the area. The Dayaks on the Teweh River came to adopt a much more critical view of the Dutch than those in Kutai, and some of them were actively involved in the Banjarmasin war. Further south, among the Lawangan subgroup of Luangan, another type of colonial resistance surfaced several times in the first three decades of the twentieth century. This was a millenarian movement known as *Nyuli* (from the word *suli*, "to resurrect"), which largely seems to have been motivated by discontent with increasing Dutch political control, taxation requirements and road building projects (Mallinckrodt 1925:37-38). By engaging in a special ritual incorporating Islamic elements, the movement's participants expected to bring back the original mythological state of immortality and reunite with their ancestors. Reverberations of the *Nyuli* movement, which attracted a lot of attention from the Dutch at the time, also reached the Teweh and Montalat rivers and the Pasir region (De Bruyn 1934:41).

In comparison with Kutai, the Dutch both met with greater resistance and exerted a greater and more active influence in the Barito region. After the suppression of the Banjar rebels they established a stronger presence in the Upper Dusun area, including on the

Teweh River, which we will be most concerned with here. As a consequence, various aspects of what could be referred to as modernization entered this region earlier than in adjacent areas in Kutai. The Rheinische Mission began work in south Borneo in the 1830s (Avé & King 1986:24), and even if there seems to have been no missionary work in the Teweh area before this century, and missionary efforts have had remarkably little success on the upper Teweh where a majority of the Dayaks remain Kaharingan, other aspects of Dutch influence thoroughly affected the Dayaks even in this relatively remote corner of the Barito region. Various features of Dayak culture, including traditional architecture (e.g. longhouses), styles of clothing and ornamentation (e.g. loincloth, earplugs, and the custom of keeping long hair among the men), largely disappeared in the early half of the twentieth century there, while it was only in the 1960s that these changes mainly took place in upriver Bentian villages. A more efficient administrative order at the subdistrict and village levels was also established much earlier in the Teweh area, a fact which, among other things, reduced the length and format of larger rituals, which were regarded as wasteful of material resources and time. However, despite these changes, and even if the Dutch forced some inhabitants in the more remote parts of the area to relocate and move closer to the main river (cf. Weinstock 1983a:126), the population on the upper Teweh has remained comparatively reluctant to adopt permanent village residence, and they have also preserved, in a somewhat unassertive way, a rich stock of knowledge about cultural tradition, an indication of the fact that they live in the area which is regarded as the ancestral homeland, and thus have a very concrete connection to their mythological past. The Bentian also regard these neighbors as more learned in these matters at the same time as their own more frequent and larger rituals make themselves more knowledgeable about "tradition in practice."

The Teweh Connection

The Bentian were not subjected to, or influenced directly by, the Banjarmasin Sultanate, with the exception of the ancestors of some Bentian subgroups who originated in the Benangin area in the middle reaches of the Teweh, and those Bentians who at various times married into communities in the latter area. However, the Teweh River was one of the most important dominions of the sultanate and it provided part of the Bentian population with opportunities for trade which quite likely predates those afforded by the Kutainese. The Bentian traded various forest products with Bekumpais on the upper Teweh in the first half of the nineteenth century. The same is also true for their Luangan Dayak neighbors on the Teweh, who in addition to the products traded by the Bentian also supplied edible bird's nests for the Chinese market (there are no caves inhabited by the species of swiftlet making these nests in the Bentian area). Some mountains on the

middle and upper Teweh are rich sources of edible bird's nests, and the product has presumably been exported from the area for a very long time (mainly via Banjarmasin, but in part also via Pasir). The Teweh trade in bird's nests and other forest products — most notably beeswax, most of which probably ended up for use in the batik industry on Java — made the river one of the economically most important tributaries of the Barito, or perhaps even, according to an eighteenth century observer, the most important one (Hartman 1790). Schwaner described its inhabitants as featuring all the characteristics required for trade (e.g. friendliness and cleverness), and in these respects distinguishing themselves from the people of the Barito (1853:116). It seems that he intended his description to apply both to the river's Malay and Dayak populations. Early trade contacts of the Teweh River Luangans may also explain some aspects of the lavish attribution of prosperity and glory to the river's ancestral population in Luangan mythology.

However, at least since the early nineteenth century, most of the profits from the Teweh River trade probably have gone into the hands of Bekumpai traders who for several centuries up until this day have dominated the inland trade in the Barito River system (cf. Schwaner 1853:73,77; Weddik 1851:20). This group, originating from Muara Bahan (Marabahan) on the lower Barito, was also an important contributing factor to the relative strength of the Banjarmasin Sultanate (together with its uniquely strong agricultural base in the Hulu Sungai plains). The Bekumpais were originally Dayaks, speaking a Ngaju-related language, who converted to Islam in 1688 (Schwaner 1853:74). From about this time they started to move upriver and have continued to do so ever since, colonizing parts of the river system further and further from Muara Bahan, at the same time as their population has steadily increased. As was noticed by Schwaner (1853:74), this population increase results in large part from their tendency to marry Dayaks as well as from the fact that converted Dayaks in the region become Bekumpai. As Weinstock (1983a:93-95) has noted, a majority of the present-day Bekumpais on the middle or upper Barito and its tributaries are former Luangan (or other) Dayaks who have adopted Bekumpai identity — and with it the Bekumpai language. Most of these, often very recent, Bekumpais regard themselves as Malays (and, ironically, their language as a Malay language), although there are, interestingly, also some who identify as Bekumpai Dayaks.

The key to the success of the Bekumpai may well have been this somewhat ambiguous identity; they are a versatile people, easily adjusting to different milieus and conditions, at home both in Dayak and Malay society. On the Teweh, where more than a third of the population is Bekumpai today, most Bekumpais (both converted Luangans and original) generally live much like Dayaks (make swiddens, hunt, etc.), with the result that they are sometimes looked down upon by the Banjarese, who are known as the most pious of the region's Muslims. The Bekumpai have nevertheless significantly influenced the Dayaks on the river, who nowadays often refer to themselves using the Bekumpai

exonym "Dusun-Tawoyan."[40] Perhaps their single most important accomplishment in this respect has been their gradual takeover of control over the trade of the Dayaks, who throughout their history of coexistence with the Bekumpai frequently have found themselves in debt to them (cf. Mallinckrodt 1927:582). Settlement in villages was probably also established largely on the Bekumpai's initiative, and large numbers of Teweh River Dayaks became Bekumpai in the 1830s, while others shifted ethnicity later, sometimes one by one, sometimes whole families or villages at a time.[41] Those who have remained Dayak have picked up attributes of Muslim culture such as circumcision, which is undergone by virtually all Teweh Dayak males today. On the whole, the Bentian's Luangan neighbors on the Teweh appear much less distinctively Dayak than the Bentian; the contrast between Dayak and Malay is also less marked here (as elsewhere in the Barito region) than in Kutai, which Teweh Dayaks sometimes nostalgically refer to as a haven of traditional Dayak culture. The common enemy — the Dutch, and before them, the Pari — was probably an important factor bringing the Malays and Dayaks closer to each other on the Teweh, at the same time as the Dutch also helped bring about this situation more directly through their modernizing efforts.

As an influential example of the articulation of Dayak and Malay culture on the Teweh River, Mangku Sari can be mentioned (see Tromp [1889:282] and Schulte [1917:391, 394-95] for some published references to Mangku Sari). Mangku Sari was an important Teweh River leader, famous for his "potency" or "magical power" (*kekuasaan, pengewasa*), who is a frequent subject of Teweh river Luangan, Bekumpai and Bentian stories today. Settlement in villages on the upper Teweh is said to have taken place under Mangku Sari in the late nineteenth century. Mangku Sari is said to have lived in many

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[40] "Dusun" is the name of the Luangan-related but distinct Dayaks who live along the banks of the middle reaches of the Barito, while "Tawoyan" (or "Taboyan") is the autonym used by the Luangans on the lower Teweh and Montalat rivers. The Bekumpai sometimes use the composite term Dusun-Tawoyan as a shorthand label for both groups — thereby following a locally popular pattern of linguistic parallelism which will be discussed below. Some Teweh Luangans (especially those of the village of Benangin), who formerly used only more restrictive local group denominations, have now adopted this Bekumpai term even if they used to employ neither of its constitutents, and otherwise take care to distinguish themselves from the Dusun.

[41] According to information by the Austrian explorer Henri Albert Henrici, the total population of the Teweh was only about 1700 in 1833. Less than twenty years later, however, Schwaner reported the population of the river basin to be around 3500 (1853:116). While there was only one village on the upper Teweh (above the Datan rapids) reported by Henrici in 1833 (Henrici 1833), there were five reported by Schwaner (1853:119). This change in population and village numbers was obviously not only due to population increase, but rather, and to a much greater extent, to the increasing settlement of Dayaks in villages who previously had lived dispersed in the surrounding forests. Similarly, the increase of Bekumpais on the river in the same period does not so much reflect an increase of original Bekumpais as one of Dayaks adopting Bekumpai identity. Comparing the information of Henrici from 1833 (Henrici 1833) with that of Salomon Müller (1857) from 1836 we can note, for instance, that the village of Djamoet which was Dayak at the former point of time had become Bekumpai at the latter. A similar large-scale identity shift occurred in the early twentieth century when part of the inhabitants of the village of Linonbesi became Bekumpai and founded a separate village.

different locations on the Teweh as well as to have had numerous wives and innumerable children. Like many other Bornean inland leaders, he was allegedly born a Dayak but later converted to Islam. As an indication of his double identity — and, perhaps also, of his general adaptability — is the fact that he is more affectionally known as "Kakah Bayo" among the Dayaks, whereas Bekumpais and other Muslims prefer the name "Mangku Sari." Another indication of his versatile character is the seemingly contrary statements that he fought the Dutch, but also gained his title and status from them. Apparently his attitude toward the Dutch was different in different periods. After they, at some point in the aftermath of the Banjarmasin war, shot an opposition leader in an incident locally known as the Oleng Mea War, Mangku Sari become their ally. Subsequently the Dayaks in the hills on the banks of the upper Teweh started to move down to the main river to establish villages, and Mangku Sari, who is said to have led this process on a Dutch directive, gained extensive authority, encompassing the whole length of the river. At this time his magical power, which he is said to have gained by meditating (*betapah*) on mountaintops and by associating with crocodiles (resulting in his acquiring the Dayak appellation Kakah Bayo, lit., "Grandfather Crocodile") helped him effect his extraordinary leadership, as it had at an earlier stage helped him counter the attacks of the dreaded Pari.

The Pari have to be mentioned in any historical overview of the Teweh River or the Bentian area. Attacks from these upper Mahakam Dayaks[42] created a climate of fear in both areas in the first half of the nineteenth century, and on the lower Teweh the inhabitants built highly elevated houses heavily fortressed by ironwood palisades (*benteng*) for protection against these attacks. These architectural constructions were a prominent feature in the region at the time, often noted by Western observers (e.g. Müller 1857:226; Schwaner 1896:cxc-cxci; Weddik 1851:22). Similar constructions of lighter materials (excluding ironwood) were also sometimes built on the upper Teweh and among the Bentian, where dispersed settlement in remote forest locations and frequent

[42] Dutch nineteenth century literature on the Barito region abounds in references to the Pari Dayaks. These allegedly fierce headhunters were said to have lived in Kutai, on the upper Mahakam, and to have made frequent incursions into the territory of what is now Central Kalimantan, traveling on these occasions along small rivers in the Mahakam-Barito watershed which today bear their name in commemoration of these events. Today there seems to be no Dayak group who use "Pari" as an autonym. It is not unlikely that it was always used only as an exonym. To which upper Mahakam Dayak groups the reports of Pari attacks referred is often unclear; however, the referent is sometimes specified as either "Pari Bahau" or "Pari Mudeng" (Modang) by present-day Bentians and other East and Central Kalimantan Luangans, who often remember the past raids of these peoples. King (1979:12), who comments on von Kessel's (1850:167,185-86) usage of the word, points out that he himself never came across it during his fieldwork (in West Kalimantan), but that the word *pare* "appears in Upper Kapuas Punan and Kayan languages, and in Maloh ritual language, meaning quite simply 'rice'" (in the sense of paddy still in the field). It can be noted here that *pare* also means "rice" in Luangan languages. Bernard Sellato (personal communication, 1996b) has proposed that the same peoples also taught rice cultivation to several "Barito groups" (e.g. Ot Danum, Pin) and that it could be on account of this that they (and the rivers on which they traveled) received their name.

moves also served defensive purposes. The cessation of these attacks and other forms of intergroup violence was a precondition for the settlement in villages and moves downriver which the Dutch and the Kutai Sultanate begun to enforce in the late eighteenth century and the second half of the nineteenth century, respectively (Knapen 2001:88-89).

The Pasir Region

There is one more region which we should briefly consider in order to get a more complete picture of the Bentian's regional connections. This is Pasir, located between the former Kutai and Banjar sultanates, an area which is today part of the province of East Kalimantan. According to Pasirese mythology, the Pasir kingdom, located close to Tanah Grogot (see Map 2), is said to have been established through the marriage of a Dayak princess to the son of the king of the Hindu-Javanese kingdom of Giri, to which it is believed that Pasir was tributary (Nüsselein 1905:566). Like Kutai Kartanegara, it was presumably Hindu at first (with an inland Dayak population following local religious beliefs) until Islam was introduced by an Arab preacher, probably at about the same time as in Kutai (in the late 16th century). As in Kutai, the Bugis also much influenced the political and economic situation in Pasir, when they started to migrate to the area after the confederation between Bugis, Kutai and Pasir leaders in 1686. In the early 17th century, the infamous pirate king Aru Paneki of the Bugis kingdom of Wajo, who married a Pasirese princess, even tried to take over power in Pasir, but failed. He nevertheless managed to make Pasir (and Kutai) tributary to Wajo, and it was from that time on that the kings of Pasir bore the title of Sultan (Knappert 1905:590-91; Nüsselein 1905:566; Tromp 1888:18). At the beginning of this century, Pasir was a truly multi-ethnic polity which consisted of a rather evenly balanced mix of Bawo Dayaks, Pasirese (Luangan-related Pasir Dayaks who had converted to Islam), Bugis, Banjarese, and Bajau fishermen (Nüsselein 1905:533). Before (and after) Pasir was drawn into the orbit of Bugis influence, it was, like Kutai, periodically subjected to the overlordship of the Banjarmasin Sultanate. The Dutch influence in Kalimantan, including the contracts signed with the Pasirese Sultanate in the mid-nineteenth century (resulting in it becoming a semi-autonomus *landschap*, recognizing Dutch supremacy), enabled Pasir, by freeing it from Bugis, Banjarese, and Kutai control, to become more sovereign than it had possibly ever been before (Magenda 1991:6).

It seems, however, that the Pasir rulers never succeeded in developing any great measure of internal control in their kingdom, even less so than their counterparts in the

neighboring sultanates.[43] Through the nineteenth century the sultans replaced each other in quick succession (Nüsselein 1905:567). Factionalism was an acute problem, especially in the late nineteenth century when the government was very weak and the Dutch regarded the region as being in a state of anarchy. In 1896, the Dutch again became involved in succession affairs when they replaced the then ruling sultan with a new one, who unfortunately died within two years. As a result, Pangeran Mangkubumi (later known as Sultan Ibrahim), a wealthy and influential Bugis trader related to the royal line, came to power. However, as this man (who himself had been suspected of slave trading) did little to bring order to Pasir, at the same time as he showed little respect for the authority of the Dutch (whose presence was becoming stronger at this time), the Dutch finally, in 1908, forced him to resign, and dissolved the Pasir Sultanate. The "disorder" in the region did not immediately cease despite the Dutch takeover, however. The aristocracy was dissatisfied with losing their position as well as with the size of the pensions that they were given in compensation. This resulted in a revolt which lasted four years, breaking out in 1913. This revolt was backed both by Muslims and Dayaks; the latter, who were motivated to join the revolt by discontent with new Dutch tax policies converted to Islam in large numbers at this time (Black 1985:285,289).

In Pasir the institution of headhunting possibly had a comparatively small importance, but, instead, slavery seems to have been very prevalent, probably as a result of the strong Bugis influence and the absence of a powerful overreaching authority in the region. Among the foremost characteristics of the Pasir region identified by Bentians are slaves (*batang ulun*). Slaves were bought from (and possibly sold to) Pasir Dayaks of the Kendilo and Telakei rivers, and some descendants of these slaves continue to live in the Bentian and Teweh areas. Bentian formal exchange expeditions (*roing*) were particularly frequently made to Pasir. Various objects and influences were acquired on these expeditions or from Pasir Dayaks who married into some upper Teweh communities. Among the most important of these are rattan seeds, water buffaloes, the *belian bawo* ritual, and aspects of magical knowledge.

Bentians say that they brought the rattan seeds that they used when beginning to plant rattan for cultivation from Bawo Dayaks in Pasir. This seems to have taken place mainly at some time in the mid or late nineteenth century. Like the Bentian, and their Luangan neighbors on the upper Teweh and the upper Bongan, the Bawo Dayaks of Pasir are renowned for their high-quality rattan and they were so already a hundred years ago (Nüsselein 1905:558). It is probable that the institution of rattan cultivation (which does not seem to have been found in other parts of Borneo outside the southeast until recently) spread from the Bawo Dayaks, although the primary reason for procuring rattan seeds

[43] As an indication of this we may see the remarkably loose social organization of the Pasir Dayaks, who probably were less subjected to integrative efforts than their counterparts in the Kutai and Barito regions.

from the Bawo which Bentians give is that Pasir is a center (*pusat*) or the origin place (*asar*) of rattan (they were in possession of both the means, i.e. seeds, which can be obtained from wild plants, and knowledge to plant rattan, and thus *did not need to learn* rattan cultivation from the Bawo). In any event, it seems that all or most of the above-mentioned groups (who have in common a rather dispersed settlement pattern) have been cultivating rattan for trade for as long as one and half centuries, in time becoming associated with the practice to the degree that it has become something of an ethnic marker for them (Fried 1995:36; Knappert 1905:618,620,626-27; Weinstock 1983b:60,63).

Another thing besides rattan for which the Bentian enjoy a regional reputation is their water buffaloes. Whereas water buffaloes are and have always been rather rare in Kutai (cf. Bock [1881]:138) and the Teweh River area, they are numerous in many Bentian villages. In some upriver communities there are several hundred animals, a condition which, according to government officials, constitutes a safety hazard as well as a sign of backwardness as long as they are allowed to roam free in and about the villages. Other Dayaks, who like the Bentian slaughter water buffaloes only in connection with major rituals in which they are used as sacrifices, often travel to the Bentian area to buy a water buffalo. However, the distinctive Bentian practice of keeping large numbers of water buffaloes is relatively recent. Like rattan seeds, water buffaloes were also brought from Pasir (one or a few at a time), at approximately the same time period, or a few decades earlier. Before that, there were no water buffaloes in the Bentian area, and only pigs and chickens were sacrificed at the thanksgiving and mortuary rituals in which they seem to play such an important role today. The reason that the water buffaloes were brought from Pasir was probably mainly determined by questions of supply. However, a notion that things — in some way or another — should be traced back from their center or origin place was probably also involved in this (according to Luangan mythology, the water buffalo originated in Pasir).

One thing for which the Pasir region is famous in south Borneo is magical or mystical knowledge (*ilmu, lemu*) which especially its indigenous inhabitants (including the Moslem Pasirese) are said to possess. The tradition of *betapa*, or isolated meditation for the purpose of acquiring *ilmu*, is associated with Pasir, a connection probably not wholly unrelated to the fact that Sultan Adam, who reigned there in the early nineteenth century, is known to have meditated on the top of Gunung Melihat, Pasir's highest mountain (Nüsselein 1905:538). *Ilmu* related to poisons and antidotes is another type of knowledge that Bentians say was particularly developed in Pasir; today the Bentian themselves are associated with these forms of knowledge. Like the Bawo Dayaks, to whom they have at times been likened, the Bentian have for a long time been regarded as “primitive” by downriver people. One reason for this reputation, besides their dispersed settlement pattern, is related to their role as cultural brokers between their downriver Dayak

neighbors in Kutai, on the one hand, and the Dayaks of Pasir and the Teweh River Luangan, on the other. By passing on aspects of Kaharingan tradition from the latter to the former, the Bentian have gained a reputation as ardent animists, well-skilled in matters of spirit interaction. An important example in this connection is *belian bawo*, a curing ritual which is characterized by a dramatic shamanic performance expressive of the special spirit familiars employed in it. This ritual is today widespread in southern Borneo, practiced both by various East and Central Kalimantan Luangans, and by the Maanyan and the Siang (an Ot Danum subgroup) in the latter province, but it originates, as its name suggests, with the Bawo Dayaks, and is thus itself a major form of Pasir *ilmu* acquired by the Bentian.

The Bentian in the Postcolonial Period

The Japanese Occupation of Indonesia during the second world war (1942-45) brought an end to Dutch colonial rule in Borneo, at least in so far as present-day Bentian conceptions of their history are concerned (the period between 1945 and 1949, when independence had already been declared but not yet recognized by the Dutch, is not acknowledged as a separate period). As among many other Indonesians, the occupation itself is remembered as a period of hardship and humiliation, although the Bentian were somewhat less subjected to Japanese demands for foods and labor than some other Indonesians as a result of the relative remoteness of their area. However, Japanese troops did make claims on Bentian rice reserves and in some villages a small number of Japanese soldiers were killed by Bentians (Fried 1995:42-43). Supplies of cloth and other downstream items such as salt ran out during this time, and cotton had to be replaced by barkcloth, while forest foods had to compensate for appropriated harvests. Some people stayed away on their swiddens for most of the time of the Occupation. More than anything else, perhaps, the experience of the period added up to an impression of exogenous forces as unpredictable and opaque, an impression which events in the post-independence period have continued to support. Today, the Japanese Occupation is generally little and only reluctantly talked about; this reflects the fact that history and violence are highly sensitive topics among the Bentian in their present situation.

Little regard is also presently given to the events surrounding independence (declared on August 17, 1945) which in many villages was most concretely manifested in an order commanding the inhabitants to fabricate a national flag to replace the former Dutch banner and in some villages a goat, significantly not a traditional domestic animal, was sacrificed by the foot of the flagpole. Effects of independence in the relatively far-off Bentian area came gradually, even though today many of these subsequent changes — and many preceding ones — are retrospectively associated with the event itself, as if they

had all occurred then. So do, for instance, people associate the abandonment of various forms of dress and traditions with independence, even though many of these aspects of culture were relinquished mainly in the 1960s, around the time of the volatile transition from Sukarno's Guided Democracy to Suharto's New Order regime. Similarly, people associate independence with the end of intergroup warfare and the abolishment of slavery and title-based leadership (which was often hereditary in practice), even if these changes mainly took place before it, under the influence of the Dutch and the Kutai Sultanate. One of the principal meanings which Bentians attribute to independence concerns stratification; reiterating a revolutionary rhetoric of the early nationalism, they describe independence as a new era in which everybody was to become equal, "sit equally low, stand equally tall" (*duduk sama rendah, berdiri sama tinggi*, I.). But all manner of twentieth century changes are typically identified with the event. As an old man expressed it to me, independence meant that the old way of life (*adet bayuh*) was to be abandoned, and new trends (*aliran baru*) had to be followed.

Many of the changes that have occurred since independence are the direct or indirect result of influence from the state which in the postcolonial period has been present in the Bentian area on a scale unprecedented in the colonial and precolonial periods. In fact, the association of independence with change in general should perhaps be read as a subtle comment by the Bentian on their experience of the postcolonial state. However, this is not to say that the degree of national integration and modernization in the area has been particularly high as compared to other parts of Indonesia. On the contrary, as a consequence of its remoteness and low population numbers, the area has remained comparatively undeveloped and marginal in these respects, and precisely its status as such is, in fact, one of the factors which most profoundly marks the Bentian's postcolonial predicament. As a result of this condition the Bentian have a regional reputation as "unprogressive" (*belum maju*), "not yet ordered" (*belum diatur*) and "backward" (*terbelakang*). In addition, other peoples' notions of the Bentian and their own self-conceptions are also thoroughly informed by a nationally and regionally prevalent view (reflecting early colonial stereotypes) according to which Dayaks are primitive and savage. Eliminating attributes of Bentian culture perceived as backward or primitive has in fact been a leading objective of government policies in the Bentian area since independence. Accordingly, the presence of the postcolonial state has by Bentians been perhaps most strongly felt as a general expectation of developing by leaving behind the old ways and adopting new ones.

An understanding of the influence of the Indonesian state on the Bentian would be difficult without reference to a few central concepts which have characterized government politics in the postcolonial era. One of the most important of these is undoubtedly *Pancasila*, literally "the five principles," the Indonesian state ideology which was established by Indonesia's first president, Sukarno, as a foundation for the

country's constitution. *Pancasila* is probably the most influential and sanctified of all Indonesian political concepts and one constantly hears it referred to on all levels of political discourse and beyond. Public speeches in particular often contain at least some reference to *Pancasila* even among remote Dayak populations such as the Bentian. Since 1973, school children and civil servants have been required to take courses in *Pancasila* ideology (Langenberg 1986:21).

Originally intended as the cornerstone of a pluralistic ideology accommodating the diverse political currents (nationalist, religious, communist) dominant in the new Indonesian nation, *Pancasila* has become above all an instrument of consensus and unity, principally employed to promote interests of stability and integration, or what is sometimes referred to as "*Pancasila* democracy" (Anderson 1990:114). For Bentians, the word has come to signify the interests and language of the state and the associated taboo on government critique which permeated the political climate of independent Indonesia until the fall of President Suharto in 1998. It has also come to stand for the desirability of unity and integration on a local level, both within communities, and with respect to relations with other peoples. Under *Pancasila*, overt expressions of individualism and ethnicity are equally divisive. *Pancasila* is associated, on the one hand, with a nationally omnipresent public culture of consensual cooperation, epitomized in the two government-endorsed concepts of *musyawarah* ("public consultation") and *gotong royong* ("collective work"/"mutual assistance"), which Bentians, like other Indonesians, commonly employ as designations for various institutions in their society. On the other hand, *Pancasila* is also closely connected with a government policy discouraging politicized expressions of ethnic identity in a strict sense of the term, while promoting, in the spirit of the national slogan *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* ("Unity in Diversity"), objectified expressions of regional variety in a restrictively cultural form (e.g. dance performances, traditional architecture) (Acciaioli 1985). Among the Bentian, these aspects of *Pancasila* policy have had the effect of discrediting their dispersed settlement pattern of swidden residence, as well as strongly inhibiting public affirmation or discussion of anything which may be defined as socially divisive. They have also contributed to a similar inhibition on the vocalization of ethnic sentiments and made cultural difference a simultaneously important and highly sensitive topic. As elsewhere in Indonesia, the application of the *Pancasila* concept has also served to foster national consciousness and create the impression that the possession of a national identity transcending more local loyalties is the mark of modern citizenship. Consequently, being, or at least appearing, "Indonesian" has become a central concern for most Bentians, and they are, in fact, more eager than any of their neighbors to deny ethnic distinctiveness and social dissension, despite their appearance, in the eyes of others, of being particularly "ethnic" and disintegrated. As in the case of other Indonesians, one of the most significant aspects of belonging to the nation-state for many

Bentians (especially the young) is the crowd-attracting celebrations of Independence Day and other major public events held in subdistrict capitals and transmigration camps.

In addition to being used to promote unity within communities and between ethnic groups, *Pancasila* is invoked by government officials and other Indonesians to advocate religious tolerance and the importance of religion. The first and most important principle of *Pancasila* is "belief in the supreme God" (*ketuhanan yang maha esa*). Developed as a compromise between secular and religious interests, this principle postulates religious freedom at the same time as it states that everybody in Indonesia must have a religion (Kipp and Rodgers 1987:16-17). As what officially counts as religion, or *agama,* is limited to the four major world religions (Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism), this freedom of religion has often been more restricting than liberating, especially in the case of peoples who follow some of Indonesia's numerous indigenous religions, which do not qualify as *agama*, but are classified as *kepercayaan* ("beliefs"). These people, including a large portion of the Bentian, have in the postcolonial period been referred to as "people who do not yet have a religion" (*orang yang belum beragama*), indicating that the proper course of development implies adopting a religion and that those who have not (who are often attributed the derogatory label of *animis*, or animists), are on a lower stage of development than those who have. In the Bentian area, missionary work, conducted mainly by Indonesians, has intensified in the postindependence period and non-Christian Bentians have been subject to a good deal of pressure to convert to Christianity, especially the younger generation and those individuals who have become government employees (*pegawai*, I.) or received an education beyond primary school.[44] The pressure to convert to one of the world religions became especially strong from the mid-1960s with the coming to power of Suharto's New Order regime and the associated communist massacres; since then lack of affiliation with a world religion has been, in addition to a sign of primitiveness, a potential indication of communism.

In order to be able to continue to practice the traditional religion without these stigma, Ngaju Dayaks in the so-called "Dayak province" of Central Kalimantan — which was established in 1957 out of the Muslim-dominated province of South Kalimantan as a result of a Dayak rebellion (see Miles 1976:102-124) — have since independence been campaigning for state acceptance of Kaharingan as *agama* (Schiller 1997:116-120). In 1980, Kaharingan received official recognition by the Indonesian Department of Religion as a branch of Balinese Hinduism under the name of Hindu Kaharingan. Since then the status of Kaharingan in Central Kalimantan has much improved and its followers, including the Bentian's Luangan neighbors on the Teweh River, are now under significantly less pressure to convert to a world religion than before.

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[44] In contrast to Luangans in Central Kalimantan, many of whom have become Bekumpai, very few Bentians and a rather limited number of other East Kalimantan Luangans have converted to Islam.

In East Kalimantan, however, the same situation does not prevail. In distinction to the Central Kalimantan government where Dayaks often have held important posts, including the position of governor, the Muslim-dominated East Kalimantan government has so far been unwilling to recognize Kaharingan in practice. East Kalimantan Kaharingans still suffer from a reputation as animists, and those who have acquired an identity card (*KTP*) have had to report Christianity or Islam as their religion since the officials issuing them have declined to fill in Kaharingan on the cards (in Indonesia, religious affiliation has to be indicated on identity cards). In the village statistics which the village head is responsible for providing to the *camat,* or subdistrict chief, Kaharingan followers have likewise been classified as Christians (when, in some instances, the village head has reported them as Kaharingans, the information has subsequently been revised at a higher level). Consequently, the Kaharingans in East Kalimantan are officially non-existent, even if unofficially close to half of the Luangan population in the province probably still consider themselves as Kaharingan for purposes of self-identification (and many of those who identify as Christian actively participate in Kaharingan rituals). In fact, Kaharingan is probably more strongly adhered to in some parts of East Kalimantan than anywhere in Central Kalimantan, at least if we understand by "Kaharingan" the "traditional religion," as opposed to Hindu Kaharingan. This is in large part due to the fact that the presence of the Indonesian state, and before that, the Dutch government, has been stronger in Central Kalimantan than in East Kalimantan. With a greater number of Dayaks in all levels of provincial government, and a tradition of more effective local administration dating back to the Dutch period (when much of Central Kalimantan, unlike East Kalimantan, was a so-called "direct rule area"), the provincial government in Central Kalimantan has been more intensely engaged in "developing" the Dayaks in their area (e.g. by demanding that they obtain permits from the police before arranging larger rituals). In comparison, East Kalimantan government officials (who are frequently outsiders, e.g. Javanese, Banjarese or Buginese) have held an attitude of relative neglect and non-intervention in this regard, especially with respect to the more remote parts of the province, such as Bentian Besar. As a consequence, Kaharingan Bentians have maintained a much more active ritual life — along with a reputation of being generally more traditional — than their Teweh River Luangan neighbors on the other side of the provincial border, even though a higher proportion of the latter identify (probably both officially and unofficially) as Kaharingans.

An important consequence of government politics concerning religion on the Bentian, however, especially since the instigation of Suharto's New Order Regime, has been a growing political and discursive importance of an almighty God. As everywhere in Indonesia, monotheism has become a publicly recognized ideal among the Bentian. This ideal has become especially important after the recognition of Kaharingan as a *agama*, and the subsequent development of Ranying Hatallah Langit as the Hindu Kaharingan Godhead in Central Kalimantan, where the Kaharingan religion has been significantly

rationalized in response to government expectations regarding *agama* (see Schiller 1997). Among Kaharingan Bentians, however, the practical importance of God as an "everyday authority" has not yet become very important, and in their rituals, God plays virtually no role. For this reason, I will not be much concerned with the concept in Chapter 4, but rather concentrate on the different kinds of spirits which represent the principal spiritual authorities for Kaharingan Bentians.[45]

Besides *agama*, another word closely associated with Pancasila political rhetoric is *adat*, used as a designation for those aspects of minority culture which are allowed and expected to be different. In Indonesia, every group is supposed to have an *adat*, that is, a set of more or less distinctive customs and traditions, and often also a code of customary law applying to intra-community affairs such as marriages and community land rights. In order to regulate this customary law, most villages in interior Kalimantan have a *kepala adat* or head of customary law, an office representing a heritage from the earlier institution of title-based leadership. In government politics and present-day Bentian discourse, *adat* is often contrasted to *agama*, and Kaharingan practices, since they are not recognized as *agama* in East Kalimantan, are commonly classified as *adat*. However, Bentian and other Dayak notions of *adat* in the sense of tradition — like those prescribed in the law books of the Islamized sultanates from which they probably originated — have "traditionally" been very broad, applying to the social world as well as to the sphere of religion (for descriptions of such broad concepts of *adat* among other Dayaks, see Metcalf 1982:4; Schiller 1997:77-79; Whittier 1973:135-37). It is only after Indonesian independence that religion, as a result of a process of religious rationalization brought about by Pancasila politics, gradually has become separated from tradition, and the meaning of *adat*, in the sense of tradition, increasingly has become reduced to non-secular tradition. Bentians nevertheless still use the word "*adat*" (or its Bentian counterpart, *adet*) in the wider sense to cover tradition in general, although the more restricted application has now become dominant. As among other Indonesian groups practicing similarly contested religious traditions (cf. Atkinson 1989; Steedly 1993), questions about what is, or ought to be, *adat* and *agama*, respectively, also frequently occupy them, even though a concern with objectifying or otherwise reconstructing *adat* in the sense of tradition in response to government expectations, has not yet become very important unlike among many other Indonesian populations (cf. Bowen 1991; Kipp &

[45] Unlike many other Dayaks, there are no strongly developed indigenous notions of an almighty God among the Bentian. An indication of this is that there is no consistently used indigenous term for God; the most commonly used is *Latallah* or *Allatallah* which apparently derives from the Arabic *Allah*. Although a creator God is referred to in myths (a fact which may be the result of a relatively recent revision), this creator God is not addressed in ritual (something which contrasts markedly with the central ritual and other importance of a Creator among many northern Dayaks such as the Berawan, who interestingly lack the "departmental deities," that is, spirit agencies associated with special responsibilities, which are so typical of the Bentian and, in Derek Freeman's 1960b:76 words, "polytheistic" Dayaks such as the Iban (see Metcalf 1989:69-71).

Rodgers 1987; Spyer 1996). The most common Bentian usage of the word *adat* may still be what I believe to be the original usage, that is, *adat* in the sense of customary law.

In addition to a head of customary law, every Bentian village, in accordance with general Indonesian practice, has a *kepala desa,* or village head. Together with a secretary (*sekretaris*), and a number of subvillage heads (*ketua RT*), these officials, who are generally popularly elected (although sometimes appointed by the subdistrict head) and who receive small salaries (insufficient for subsistence) from the government, form the formal leadership of the village. Informally, as we shall see later, elders and extended family heads, or those who have a lesser or higher degree of *manti* status, also play a significant part in the regulation of social relations within the village. The position of village head is officially the highest ranking office in the village, although in many villages the head of customary law, who is usually a direct descendant of an earlier title-bearing leader, has more authority in practice. One reason for this is that most influential elders are either unqualified or unwilling to accept the post as village head as it involves a lot of paperwork. Whereas it is the regulation of internal social affairs which forms the jurisdiction of the head of customary law, the domain of the village headman (who, like the head of customary law, is always a male) consists of the regulation of the externally imposed, government-dictated order in the community. The village head is the principal representative of the state in the village, in the sense that it is his task to oversee the implementation of government regulations and provide data on the village for the government. He is also responsible for the distribution of village subsidies (*uang pembantuan desa*) — since the 1970s one of the most important aspects of state influence on the Bentian — as well as for hosting important guests and communicating the requests of villagers to subdistrict officials. He may thus be seen as something of an intermediary between the state and his people. Because of these qualities of the position, Bentian village heads have also long played a pivotal role in integrating the Bentian into the larger society.

One of the most important implications of this integration into the larger society is that Bentians have become obliged to register residence in particular villages. This classification of residence, which began in the early twentieth century, but which has become increasingly strict in the postcolonial era, imposes important restrictions on mobility. Moving from one village to another today is far from a straightforward business, and it cannot be done without due notification to village heads. Even visiting other villages can sometimes prove difficult. Outside the Bentian area, staying in places where one is not known often requires the possession of an identity card — which many Bentians were still not able to acquire in the 1990s — as such documents may be requested by the police and other authorities, including the military. Due to the military's "dual function" (*dwifungsi*, I.) of being responsible both for security and for various other tasks in the public sector, the military is posted in every subdistrict, including Bentian

Besar, as is the case also with the police. In addition to these agents of security, who are mainly outsiders who spend most of their time in the subdistrict capitals where they are posted, a small number of local men in every village belong to civil defense units called *HANSIP* whose members regularly receive training in the subdistrict capitals. Movement is especially difficult for a period of several months before and during national elections. Indeed, registration for these intermittent events has itself been an important factor motivating a stricter classification of residence.

As a result of the country's hierarchic and centralized power structure, voting in Indonesia — especially during the New Order era when only three parties were permitted and government politics were overwhelmingly dominated by the state-backed Golongan Karya (GOLKAR) party — has commonly been perceived as a state ceremony organized to demonstrate national unity and government loyalty rather than an institution through which the people can influence the politics of the state (e.g. Anderson 1990:114; Pemberton 1994:5). Such perceptions are perhaps especially common among small and marginal minorities such as the Bentian, among whom voting has generally been perceived not so much as a right as an obligation, part of what is required of modern citizens. Factors contributing to such notions in the Bentian case are suspicions of electoral fraud on all levels, their assumptions that they have very small possibilities of influencing, or gaining much from, government politics, at the same time as they are being subjected to tight control in connection with elections.

The full significance of the fact that the Bentian are regarded as less developed and modern than their neighbors cannot be grasped without considering the central importance that the concepts of "development" (*pembangunan*) and "progress" (*kemajuan*) have had in Indonesia. During Suharto's New Order regime (*Orde Baru*) these concepts, especially the former, became what Michael van Langenberg (1986) has coined "keywords" in Indonesian government politics (cf. Heryanto 1988). In the 1970s, with the oil boom, and as timber extraction in the country took on speed, launching programs of development became an increasingly common government activity also in the more remote parts of the Indonesian archipelago. Developing "isolated" tribal populations identified as particularly undeveloped then became a special issue for the government (especially for the Department of Social Affairs, or DEPSOS) as these groups, through their "negative" characteristics, appeared to negate the success of the government in its development efforts. In order to achieve this end, a program for the management of "isolated peoples" (*suku terasing*) was established, the principal targets being hunters and gatherers and swidden cultivators, in other words, people who have in common a lifestyle of being nomadic and dispersed. Mobility is, in fact, as Tsing (1993:155) has noted, a defining characteristics of the *suku terasing*, and the same feature, like dispersal, is a mark of a "lack of order," which in its turn is the prototypical attribute assigned to populations considered undeveloped. Standard measures applied in

the isolated peoples' program have been relocation and agricultural guidance, including the introduction of settled cash-crop cultivation and fertilizers. Since that which in Indonesia has been understood as development and progress in the fields of culture and social life is closely associated with notions of "order" or "regulation" (*aturan*), attempts to "order" or "regulate" the daily activities of the target populations have constituted common development strategies applied in the program.

Although the Bentian, unlike some other similarly remote and dispersed swidden cultivators in southeast Borneo, have not gained official status as *suku terasing*, the possibility of becoming so, like the stigma attached to their reputation of backwardness, has formed an incentive for them, if not to conform unconditionally to all aspects of change desired, then at least to try to make an appearance of being developed and ordered.[46] An indication of this is that Bentians generally avoid discussion about, and try to conceal, those aspects of their culture and social life which for some reason are or have been regarded as backward or disorderly, including customs and practices already discontinued. In addition to swidden cultivation and swidden residence (which to government officials represent major examples of unregulated and divisive practices, respectively), particularly sensitive aspects in this regard include litigation (which implies intracommunity division), the practice of keeping water buffaloes and pigs unfettered (which, besides being indicative of a lack of order, is regarded by government officials as dangerous and unhygienic, respectively), polyandrous unions (which suggest promiscuity and violate national law), as well as the long-abolished practices of slavery, intergroup warfare and headhunting (which, besides being classic savage insignia confirming the stereotype of Dayaks as primitive, render the Bentian as violent, a characteristic which makes them particularly uneasy). Another indication of a propensity of Bentians to represent themselves as modern and developed is their eagerness to reiterate state discourse and nationalist propaganda in public discussions, such as when they claim, for example, that there is only one God, common to all people irrespective of religion, or that all ethnic groups are basically similar.

It is not solely on the basis of their own initiative that Bentians try to divert attention from such practices as are regarded as undeveloped or disordered, but also because of an outright pressure from the government to make them abandon them to which they have at times been subjected since independence. Examples of such pressure are the attempts, channeled by subdistrict officials and some village heads, to make them stop building longhouses and, instead, build small single-family houses, attempts which reflect notions of administrative order according to which every *kaka*, a term denoting a household unit ideally led by a senior male (*kepala keluarga*, I.), should dwell separately (*masing-*

[46] Swidden cultivating Dayak groups which have been classified as *suku terasing* in southeast Borneo include Bukits in South Kalimantan, and Bawo Luangans in Central Kalimantan and Pasir (East Kalimantan).

masing, I.), preferably in houses aligned in neat rows and provided with a number and the name of the household head on a sign attached to their front wall. Bentians have also been told by government officials that they should stay in the villages rather than out on their swiddens, and that they should stop using certain forms of traditional dress and adornment, such as the loincloth (long a major sign of primitiveness in the region and which government officials declared as "inappropriate in the age of independence" in connection with the first national elections). Rumors also have it that government officials have been searching through some villages for individuals involved in polyandrous unions.

Despite these government attempts (real or perceived) at transforming Bentian culture, and its concomitant devaluation, Bentians do not generally consider development merely or even mainly as negative. In fact, they welcome a great deal of change understood as development, and many people even concede to the critique of their own culture, at least in part. To the degree that Bentians are openly critical of development or the government, they are mainly critical about the lack of development in their area. Thus, Bentians have long been critical about the absence of roads in their area and they are generally positive about the existence of the roads which were established in the 1980s and 90s, even if most of these are poorly managed and some of them are "owned" by logging companies which have been reluctant to take Bentians as passengers on their trucks. The same is true regarding Bentian attitudes toward education (schools were established in a few villages already in the Dutch period, but the primary school network was extended to include most villages during independence), even if many children, as a result of swidden work or residence, sometimes neglect school. The Bentian also have a basically approving attitude toward public health services, even if these, as already noted, are exceptionally restricted in their area, and provided mainly in the form of vitamin injections and antibiotics by a visiting nurse (for hospital services, Bentians have to travel downstream to Tenggarong or Samarinda, minimally two days' boat journey away). Another aspect of development of which the Bentian have been basically approving is the government's village subsidy program, which, to mention one of its most notable effects, has enabled all Bentian villages to acquire generator-powered rice mills.

Even if the Bentian can be said to have a mainly positive attitude toward development and integration into the larger society, this does not mean that they have welcomed all aspects of integration and recent change in their area. One aspect about which many Bentians are largely critical, and openly so, is logging company activities. In addition to logging proper, these activities include the management of so-called "Industrial Forest Plantations" (*HTI*), planted mainly with rubber and fast-growing trees grown for cellulose production, as well as village development programs (*proyek pembinahan desa*), which

the companies have conducted on behalf of the government.[47] The main source of Bentian discontent with the logging companies, which nowadays are all Indonesian, is the fact that the latter in many instances have failed to respect traditional community landrights, and, as a consequence, destroyed vast areas of Bentian fallow fields and rattan cultivation. Particularly instrumental in generating discontent was the clearcutting in 1993 of thousands of hectares of Bentian lands intended as a plantation for the inhabitants of the transmigration camp which a couple of years later (delayed as a result of Bentian opposition) was established in the midst of their territory (for details on these events, and the ensuing developments, see Fried 1995:154-224).

Bentian resistance to logging company activities has been extraordinarily strong (in general, similar violations of "traditional landrights," although commonplace, met with little resistance in New Order Indonesia), involving suits against the companies concerned as well as numerous petitions directed to various government authorities on all levels, including Jakarta. Thanks to the assistance of Indonesian and international NGOs, and an increasingly open press, it has also made them famous throughout Indonesia, especially since Loir Botor Dingit, the son and heir of the late "regional head of customary law" (*kepala adat besar*), in 1997 received the International Goldman Environmental Award. The exceptionally strong reaction of the Bentian to outsider encroachment on their lands reflects the exceptional magnitude of their rattan cultivation, which since the 1970s, as a result of rising world market prices, has enabled many Bentians to obtain considerable cash incomes. However, some Bentians have still taken up employment with the logging companies, and a couple of dozen Bentian families have also taken up residence at the transmigraton site, thereby surrendering (by signing a contract) their claims to land other than the three hectare rubber and vegetable plot granted them, together with a small house, as part of the transmigration program. Despite their strong critique of logging and transmigration, Bentian attitudes toward these phenomena are not undivided, and many hold basically ambivalent views about them. A fundamental ambivalence is even more characteristic of Bentian attitudes toward the policies of the state, which they did, however, not criticize openly until recently.

The Bentian in their Local World: Subsistence and Settlement

Place means everything to the Bentian. As I will argue in the following section, a very concrete attachment to land and locality is fundamental to most aspects of Bentian personal and social life. Social actions and interaction and people's understandings of

[47] It is common practice in Kalimantan that logging companies conduct development projects. It is understood that by doing so they recompense for the revenues that they obtain from their concessions.

themselves reflect their concrete positioning (and narrative re-positioning) in, and distribution over, what are essentially social landscapes. Processes of spatial or geographical positioning and movement go a long way in defining the dynamics of Bentian society. Because of this intimate connection of land and people, Bentians experience forests as social terrain, and for the same reason, both their more abstract and their concrete notions of their relationship to the land center on practical association with it.

Bentian Swidden Cultivation

The Bentian live in a rainforest environment with heavy rainfall usually ranging between 2000 and 4000 mm per year. The months between June and September are usually the driest, and rainfall is heaviest around the turn of the year between December and February. However, rainfall is unpredictable, and in some years there may be a prolonged dry season with little or no rain, whereas in others it may rain regularly throughout the year. Much of the sparsely populated Bentian area was covered with primary rainforest until recently, but logging operations since the early 1980s have dramatically reduced its extent to well below a quarter of the total.

The Bentian, as already mentioned, are swidden cultivators which means that they plant rice in plots of forests cleared by burning, usually located some distance away from villages. Although hill rice (*Oryza sativa*) is the economically and culturally most important crop — providing the highly valued food staple as well as a major symbol and basic material element in rituals — a large number of other cultigens (e.g. cassava, bananas, coconut palm, sugar palm, areca palm, eggplant, cucumbers, maize, to name some of the most important) are also planted in the swiddens and around villages. A large number of different varieties of rice with different properties are also used, and several varieties are always planted in the same swidden.[48] The diversity of crops and rice varieties planted point to what Christensen and Mertz (1993) have described as a "risk avoidance strategy" characterizing Bornean swidden systems. The unpredictable rainfall together with the predation of wild animals make swidden cultivation quite a risky business, and it is not uncommon for rice or other harvests to fail altogether. Severe droughts have always occurred occasionally, but they were particularly common in the 1980s and 1990s, leading to region-wide rice deficiencies and reliance on purchased rice

[48] Unfortunately, I did not conduct a survey on the use of rice seed varieties but Stephanie Fried (1995:118) reports a total of sixty-seven varieties planted (between three to fifteen by each family) in a Bentian village "not known for preserving rice stocks." This number may be compared with a total of thirty-two among the Bukit, and fifty-seven among the Taboyan, as reported by Christensen and Mertz (1993).

and other swidden crops. The characteristic diversity of Dayak swidden systems may thus be regarded as an adaptation to the unstable environment, and this function, together with concrete experiences of hardship resulting from such unpredictability (and what we may call a subsistence farmer identity), helps explains the resistance to giving up the lifestyle which frequently characterizes Dayaks in the face of government development projects advocating other subsistence models.

Apart from vegetables and fruit trees used for food, Bentians also grow various plants for medicinal and ritual uses, and in their swiddens they also plant or encourage the spontaneous propagation of many wild-growing trees, bamboos and rattans, which provide, among other things, different kinds of construction materials. Perhaps some fifty variously useful plants may be found in a single Bentian swidden.[49] Among the most important of these plants is rattan, especially the *sega* (I.) or *soke* species (*Calamus caesius*), which is the one which has had the highest and most consistent market value, and which is most extensively cultivated. Apart from this species, about five or six other rattan species are also irregularly sold, and in addition to them some ten or more species without market value are used locally. Rattan is by far the most important cash crop and others such as coffee, rubber or peanuts are only cultivated by small numbers of Bentians, usually in rather small quantities. In comparison, *gaharu* (I.) or aloe wood (*Aquilaria sp.*) which is collected in primary forest and sold to traders, has a much greater importance in the Bentian cash economy, and the same is also true for honey (collected from certain species of large trees which attract colonies of wild bees, so-called "bee trees," or *tanyut*), which is periodically sold in large quantities. Historically, other forest products such as resins have also been important as trade items. Swiddens are located in and immediately surrounded by forests and Bentians, like other forest dwellers, utilize a wide range of forest foods (e.g. fruits, mushrooms, palms, tubers) found in both primary and formerly cultivated, regenerating forest. These forest foods together make up a significant portion of all foods consumed, and proteins chiefly derive from fish and game (mainly wild boar, deer, and mousedeer, but on occasion also various other animals) which most men regularly search for, using, among other things, dogs and spears, bamboo spear spring traps, snares, cast nets, angling rods, and tree-root fish poison (*Derris* sp.), which stupefies the fish. Livestock (chickens, pigs, and water buffaloes) are also kept (both in villages and swiddens, water buffaloes usually in the swiddens), although domestic animals are only consumed in connection with rituals (which may, however, at times be very frequent). Water buffaloes are important indices of wealth and hence of influence

[49] Again, I have no precise statistical data on this matter. Christensen and Mertz (1993) report incomplete lists of totals of 85 and 64 plants cultivated in a Taboyan and Bukit community, respectively (excluding plants with purely medicinal or religious functions). Fried (1995:19) notes that "Bentian gardens contain mixtures of over forty vegetables and medicinal herbs," in addition to a large number of fruit trees, other trees, and rattans, etc.

in the community, although their owners only rarely sell or manage to get good quantities of cash for them, despite the high monetary value that they are recognized as having. The number of these animals kept in some Bentian communities is probably higher than anywhere else in the region and the Bentian are infamous for their water buffaloes which wander freely about the villages (and often in them at night), inciting fear and derogatory comments from outsiders.

The swidden cycle of the Bentian resembles that of other Southeast Asian swidden cultivators. After a swidden site has been chosen, (an intricate process involving negotiation with relatives and potential prior users, considerations of age, off-farm activities, weather predictions, and, in some cases, omen readings), swidden work begins with the slashing of undergrowth (*nokap*), a work task performed by small groups of men, usually in May or June. A few weeks later, individual men fell larger trees (*noweng*), and then in August or September, towards the end of the dry season, the same men and perhaps their family members clear the fields by burning (*nyuru*). Then, with the onset of the rains, usually around October, planting (*ngasek*) takes place. This is work done in cooperation by men making holes in the ground with dibbling sticks and women following behind and pitching rice seeds in the holes, often in large workgroups of up to fifty people or more, especially if rice planting in the *mementian* fashion takes place. Participation is according to a principle of balanced reciprocity (ideally, the number of workers who are sent to households which have provided workers should be equal to how many were originally provided), and the household which owns the rice field additionally provides festive food, including meat, for the day to all participants. After planting follows a period of occasional weeding (*ngejikut*) mainly performed by small groups of women, which is closed with harvesting (*ngoteu*), also chiefly women's work, and a harvest ritual (*kerewaiyu*, replaced by a Christian version, in converted families) in February-March. At several points in the agricultural year, activities may be adjusted to lunar cycles or the appearance of particular constellations of stars (Weinstock 1983a:172-78), or to the advent of certain seasonally appearing birds (*pempulun taun*), although such considerations seem to have lost some of their former importance, and may always have been subordinate to weather considerations.

Swiddens are cleared in virgin forest only in a rather small minority of cases, usually by young men or people with extensive family responsibilities. More frequently people opt for young or old secondary forest, even if the yield is lower. Usually, but not always, a field is cultivated a second year (the low level of nutrients in the soil does not allow for more than two years of subsequent cultivation of the same spot), often at the same time as a new field is opened up close by. A common pattern is to cultivate two or three adjacent or closely located swidden sites in succession, which enables the cultivators to use one swidden house for the whole period without having to move. It is also common for old people to return to a site which they cultivated in their youth. Bentian swidden

cultivation, then, is not of a particularly expansive type but rather functions according to what we might call a rotational model. Several factors work together to ensure a long-term attachment to the land: rattan and fruit trees plantations, the Bentian landrights system, and, in the present situation, shrinking areas available for cultivation as a result of logging concessions and transmigration.

The Role of Rattan in the Bentian Economy

In Bentian swiddens, rice is planted interspersed with rattan and other crops. Rattan seedlings are planted a little later than the rice, when the rice is already high enough to provide shade for the seedlings (for a discussion of Bentian rattan cultivation techniques, see Fried 1995:113-21). Rattan takes at least seven years to mature (a few years more if grown from seeds instead of seedlings), so it is left to grow in the abandoned rice fields which quickly regenerate into secondary forest along with various fruit trees and palms planted or spared in the clearing process. The site is then not truly abandoned, as its owners regularly return to tend it or harvest its yields. In the first few years following rice cultivation, many vegetables and useful plants (e.g. herbs) continue to grow in the swiddens. After some 7-10 years, various palms and fruit trees dominate. For at least as long as unharvested rattan grows on the site, the planter retains a very active interest in it. Rattan can be harvested in smaller or larger quantities and Bentians usually cut the many stems which make up a rattan clump selectively and take care to leave the lower parts of the stems uncut, as new shoots grow out from these. Cut rattan quickly regenerates and may be recut once every few years after the initial harvest. As rattan does not need to be harvested at any particular point of time, selling can be adjusted to personal needs for cash (e.g. for rituals or for travel) or to market fluctuations, which have long been, and especially lately, considerable. Allowing a longer period of maturation and longer intervals between harvests only increases the yield (Weinstock 1983b:63). On the other hand, the owner may at any stage opt to turn the rattan garden into a swidden should he need the plot for food production. Rattan is thus a highly flexible cash crop, which as Weinstock (1983b:63) has recognized, has the additional advantage of providing the cultivator with an incentive to maintain a fallow period long enough to ensure the continuing productivity of the land for swidden cultivation (7-15 years), thus providing an ecologically sustainable model of alternating food crop/cash crop production. Moreover, being a wild-growing, local plant, rattan does not upset the ecological balance of the environment, and its cultivation counteracts the exhaustion of wild rattan through over-collecting (ibid. 64). It was partly because of this fact that Loir Botor Dingit was granted the Goldman Environmental Award, in recognition of the ecologically sound character of the Bentian system of rattan cultivation as much as it was

intended as a reward for his attempts at defending Bentian lands against timber and plantation company claims.

The principal importance of rattan for the Bentian, however, does not lie with its ecological, but rather, with its economic significance, which has grown tremendously in the last few decades. Since the 1970s, following increasing world market demand and declining supplies elsewhere, Bornean rattan prices have multiplied many times, and considerable sums of money have since then flowed into the Bentian economy, even if difficulties of transportation have ensured that local prices have remained far below coastal prices. We may be able to better appreciate the value of rattan if we consider that one swidden (which is commonly about one hectare in size) frequently produces around one and sometimes up to three tons of (dry weight) rattan canes, and that prices approaching one thousand US dollars, at best, have been obtained per ton (a considerable income by Indonesian standards). As Bentian families often do not have only one or two rattan gardens, but plant rattan every time they make a swidden, and, in addition, often inherit rattan gardens from parents and other relatives, this means that many individuals are, or have been, in possession of considerable wealth.[50] In fact, many people have more rattan to sell than they are able to harvest themselves, and a system, referred to as *bagi dua* (I., "divide in two"), has been established whereby cutters get half (or sometimes even two-thirds) of the yield, and the farmer the rest. Young men without rattan gardens of their own are particularly inclined to work as cutters and commonly travel around among relatives and to other villages in search of such work.

The high prices since the 1970s, together with their rapid and unpredictable fluctuations, have sometimes occasioned what Tsing (1984:242-45) with reference to the Meratus situation has called "rattan crazes," short periods marked by high prices during which the people in a particular area try to sell as much as they can, in the process sometimes cutting down immature rattans and stems below the minimum length required for regeneration, thus disrupting the continuity of the production system. In the 1980s Luangans on the Teweh River reportedly also sold entire uncut rattan gardens, thus relinquishing their rights to the plots altogether (Weinstock 1983b:65). Sometimes these rattan crazes have also involved other than *sega* rattan (the most commonly cultivated species), as in the dry season of 1998 when *kesole*, a thick, wild-growing rattan usually lacking market value, suddenly "gained a price," and some Bentian communities became busy selling as much as they could of the species which, not having been harvested lately, was found in good quantities in the surrounding forests. In the 1990s, however, prices again became much lower after the introduction of an export ban on unprocessed and semi-processed rattan in 1988 (Safran and Godoy 1993), and rattan crazes have since

[50] In a survey including 30 adult men in Dilang Putih, Mulya (1993:39) found that one man on average owned 11 hectares of rattan.

become more restrained. Periodically, prices have even been so low that Bentians have opted not to sell rattan canes at all, in the meantime devoting more efforts to plaiting and selling rattan baskets and mats (which generally have procured more stable, if comparably much lower prices than the canes). As among many other Dayaks, manufacture of rattan baskets and mats (made in black and white patterns of thin, partly dyed strips) has long been the most common evening pastime among the Bentian, but the practice has recently become notably professional among some Bentians, especially on the Kias tributary of the upper Teweh, where they and their Luangan neighbors produce and sell very large quantities of rather coarse rattan baskets which are sold in Barito markets and exported to Bali via Banjarmasin. Other Bentians also make, and have done so for a long time, and sell rattan baskets, but somewhat less regularly and in much smaller quantities (although with an appreciably finer quality fetching higher prices).

Despite the periodically high income of rattan, it is only a limited number of Bentians who can be said to have become rich on rattan (that is, that could afford to buy TVs and build modern-style houses of expensive materials transported upriver at great cost), more particularly those few individuals who buy up rattan from kin and neighbors and resell it to traders, and these people live in most respects like ordinary Bentians, even if some of them choose not to make swiddens some years and instead buy their rice from relatives or shops. The income of most families often suffices for no more than school fees for their children and the purchase of a restricted variety of consumer goods such as sugar, kerosene, canned sardines, clothes, and transistor radios, which are sold in upriver areas by local shopkeepers and itinerant traders at prices often two to three times higher than coastal prices. Despite rattan, the material standard of living of the Bentian is quite low even compared with other Dayaks in Kutai, a condition which reflects the relative remoteness of their area and their relatively restricted involvement in wage labor. However, because their major source of cash income is integrated with their food production system, they have to a comparatively high degree retained a subsistence oriented lifestyle typical of swidden cultivators, and hence also a comparatively high degree of self-sufficiency and economic independence.

Bentian Notions of Land Ownership

All Bentians, and possibly all Luangans (Weinstock 1979), seem to follow a somewhat loosely conceptualized system of landrights according to which the clearing of a plot of primary forest establishes, in principle, permanent rights which are inherited bilaterally (married couples, who usually are responsible for the clearing of land, share rights equally). This pattern seems well-adjusted to the long-established Bentian practice of rattan cultivation and I would not find it surprising if it was originally brought about by

rattan cultivation. As has been demonstrated by Anna Tsing, who has documented three distinct types of landrights regulations among the Meratus Dayaks, landrights systems can be highly flexible constructions and their variations often indicate different forms of articulation within regional political economies rather than different sets of cultural "first principles" (1984:127-152).[51] Indeed, on my part, and on the basis of my experience of Bentian conceptions, I would argue that we should perhaps not talk about landright *systems* at all in this respect. In the Bentian situation, as in the central part of the Meratus mountains studied by Tsing, jural principles far from hold any absolute authority, and claims of land are ordinarily not — at least not in internal community affairs — couched in jural language. Instead, "people's intimate familiarity with the plants and natural features of the landscape as well as their knowledge of each other's current and past activities form a framework for discussion of social affiliations in relation to landscape" (Tsing 1984:129).

Bentian land use organization is as much the result of negotiation sensitive to specific needs and concrete past actions as it is the result of an application of any abstract principle. Landrights conflicts between community members, moreover, are uncommon, and normally forestalled by the *manti* or other elders who attempt to work out solutions in the interest of the community. The notions of permanent ownership and bilateral inheritance have more the status of "working principles" than absolute rules. They remain important, however, not the least because the existence of rattan and fruit trees on the plot ensures continuing interest in it, and because the owner's children for obvious reasons (living with him or otherwise interacting with him) develop concrete relations to the land. They also represent the norm and are vaguely recognized as an ideal. In this respect, the Bentian situation is clearly different from that of such Borneo peoples as the Kayan (Rousseau 1978), the Rungus Dusun (Appell 1976), or the eastern Meratus (Tsing 1984:133-38), among whom reportedly anybody from within the community, regardless of kinship ties, can lay in principle equally strong claims to a piece of land.[52]

However, in common with these societies, the Bentian also, for at least the last few centuries, recognize a principle of village territoriality (interestingly, this does not necessarily seem to be the case with the central mountains Meratus, whose settlement pattern is even more dispersed than that of the Bentian), and this principle may theoretically interfere with the principle of bilateral inheritance (i.e. if the descendants

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[51] Tsing (1984:127-28) criticizes a tendency in the Borneo ethnography (Appell 1971; Weinstock 1979) to assign only one system of land tenure to each ethnic group. Against such "ethnic generalization" which tends to imply an understanding of variance in terms of deviation from basic cultural norms, she advocates active attention to differences as significant expressions of adjustment to historically variable local and regional conditions.

[52] The landright principles among these peoples may, however, recently have changed. Rousseau (personal communication, 2004) states that the situation had changed among the Baluy Kayan already in 1988.

of the founder have moved to another community), as it states that each community (or village, in the present situation) possesses a particular, carefully delineated territory to which community members hold primary rights (these rights are held collectively in the case of previously uncultivated land). In practice, the rights of descendants are usually respected even in their absence, and swidden site selection normally includes negotiation with authoritative elders and/or the *kepala adat* (head of customary law), who attempt to prevent potential conflicts. If the principle of village territoriality is applied, it may either be the "traditional" boundaries, that is, which prevailed in the nineteenth or early twentieth century prior to the government-sanctioned establishment of permanent villages, or the present, official village boundaries that are invoked. Some of the swiddens used by the members of a community are also frequently outside the village territory, and for such lands there are no community, but only individual, claims. The principle of village territoriality is most clearly influential in such cases when, as apparently happened quite frequently in the past, a community buys up a territory from some other community; then former individual claims to plots within that territory are lost along with it.

To further complicate things, there is also a third principle regarding land ownership influencing Bentian relations to land. This is a principle (stated in the Basic Agrarian Law of 1960) according to which the national government, like the Dutch government before it, owns all forested land which is not under cultivation or has a "yield" (*hasil*, I.). The principle has become particularly important for the Bentian since the 1980s when logging operations commenced in their area and concessions sometimes overlapping with land to which Bentian communities and individuals held claims were granted to logging companies by the state. As Bentians generally affirm government authority and are anxious to appear "modern," and thus, in their understanding, acquiescent citizens, they generally accept the principle of ultimate government ownership of land, even if it has enabled the appropriation of their lands by logging companies. In fact, Bentians often refer to the principle when they want to point out that they hold "rights" (*hak*, I.) to some particular plot of land because of the existence of rattan or fruit trees on that plot planted by their ancestors. This is also the line of argument that they have employed in conflicts with the logging companies. The logging companies, in turn have employed the strategy of dismissing the allegedly cultivated plants as wild-growing, an assertion sometimes difficult to prove wrong, especially if logging already has taken place. As elsewhere in Indonesia, the principle of government land ownership has led to a condition which Weinstock (1983a:150-53) has referred to as "plant tenure," that is, a situation in which it is the plants rather than the land which is owned, and the latter only can be claimed through the former. Thus, when Bentians today plant rattan on their swiddens, they do so not only for the marketable produce which they expect to obtain, but also with an eye to securing property rights to the land.

Although importantly influenced by several sometimes contradictory principles, Bentian landrights notions — and Bentian relations to their local milieu more generally — are primarily based on practical associations with the land. Past experiences of one's own and of one's ancestors recurrently and tacitly validate or motivate most types of actions pertaining to land use as broadly defined (e.g. cultivation, hunting, decisions about land distribution, settlement, travel). Much more than providing the principal guideline for the *manti* in the resolution of intracommunity conflicts relating to land use (together with a notion of precedence), such experiences, essentially concrete and personal in character, inform Bentian notions of land on a "deep," or ontological, level. What this bears witness to is that land and landscapes for the Bentian are thoroughly social — "social landscapes" in Tsing's words — invested with signs and traces of past and present human action. This also applies to advanced secondary forest which to outsiders may appear as virgin forest, but to Bentians is full of indications of its past condition in the form of rattan gardens and fruit trees, some of which may be more than a hundred years old, and perhaps remnants of old houses or graves. But even primary forest may bear traces of human activity in the form, for instance, of harvested *gaharu* trees or bee trees (which are tended and cleared), or possibly of wild boar spring traps, which can be fatally dangerous to people. Such traces indicate, besides ownership, strictly speaking (most fruit trees, whether wild or cultivated, are claimed by particular individuals who possess exclusive rights to sell their yield, even though anybody is said to be free to eat the ripe fruit on the spot), varying degrees of *association* of particular people with a place.[53] And such association, in its turn, adds up to varying degrees of familiarity with a location, which is what largely determines a person's inclination to use, in whatever way relevant, the place in question. Nature is never truly or entirely wild for Bentians but, rather, a social space where the degree of personal association with a locality usually correlates negatively to that of some other people.[54]

Staying for much of the time on often rather isolated swiddens surrounded by forest, Bentians generally have an extensive knowledge of their natural environment. Reflecting the importance of swidden cultivation in this environment, the forest is divided into "zones" corresponding to different stages of regeneration, the four principal ones being

[53] Fruit trees form important points of physical orientation, as do some particularly big trees, which are named.

[54] It is, as Tsing (1993:168) has remarked for Meratus forests, "difficult to draw a line between the 'wild' and the 'domesticated'" in the Bentian environment. Some wild plants and trees are tended, while some (accidentally or purposively) cultivated ones are left to do without care. Moreover, both "the wild" and "the domesticated" — if we refer here to primary and secondary forest, respectively — can be subject to varying degrees of familiarity, and most of the latter category is, anyway, in a state of more or less advanced reversion into nature.

boak (the regrowth of the first one to two years following swidden cultivation), *kelewako* (young secondary forest without any larger trees), *bateng* (regenerating forest where there is already some incidence of large trees), and *alas* (virgin forest or very old secondary forest) — each of which are useful in different ways.[55] Knowledge of the environment is in fact to no small degree an effect of the swidden cultivation system which ensures ongoing interest in former swidden sites as they continue to yield produce after they have reverted to secondary forest, and which demands frequent moves to new swidden sites, often located quite far apart from each other, and thus encourages a typically fairly spread-out familiarity with a number of different, disconnected forest localities. Other activities, such as the hunting and collecting of forest products, and the gathering of vegetable materials required for the manufacture of ritual paraphernalia, also contribute to the acquisition of such forest knowledge, and these activities help explain the fact that men, who normally carry them out, possess by far more forest knowledge than women, who tend to spend little time in the forest, and who are also frequently told not to do so because of the dangers held to be involved. Conversely, the more or less extensive forest knowledge and forest familarity of men add up to a kind of authority of men over women and of some men over other men (cf. Atkinson 1989, M. Rosaldo 1980; Tsing 1993).

However, despite the rather extensive general forest knowledge of Bentian men, and their often extensive association with particular forest localities, their familiarity with the forest is still significantly restricted, not the least since others' activities restrict their movement in it. In fact, most of the forest which Bentians are likely to come into contact with can be seen as divided into what Tsing in the Meratus setting has called "personal familiar territories" (1984:277-79). Bentian men, like their Meratus counterparts, tend to use and wander about mainly in certain specific forest localities and to avoid others. This tendency can be seen as a consequence of the swidden cultivation system (which entails extensive land use limiting the availability of land for any particular individual, especially in the proximity of villages), including the notion of permanent and devolvable landrights following the clearing of primary forest, although there are also other factors contributing to it. A locality regularly frequented by some particular people is, even if not theirs strictly or juridically speaking, still "theirs" practically speaking. Even if they do not necessarily own it, other people are generally not supposed to hunt or collect *gaharu* there (particularly not if it is located in the vicinity of the principal user's swidden), and they would usually be more or less uncomfortable to do so, at least if they were not closely related to the person in question or previously familiar with the locality. Examples of Bentian uneasiness related to traversing other people's territories which I sometimes witnessed and responded to with amazement during fieldwork occurred in situations

[55] Each of these forest succession categories can be further divided into various subcategories. In addition, Bentians also distinguish between different sorts of forests on the basis of soil and topographic conditions.

when someone passed an unacquainted person's swidden: quickly rushing by at some distance while making as little sound as possible, people would in such cases appear markedly anxious to avoid contact or bring attention to themselves.

Uneasiness in other's or unfamiliar territories is characteristically composed of several components. In addition to involving a sense of potentially violating other's "rights" (the quotation marks are to indicate that these rights tend to involve more or less implicit prerogatives established by practical association rather than explicitly defined or officially recognized jural rights), such sentiments typically include notions of danger of some kind (in fact, it appears that a sense of uneasiness also more generally is connected with a sense of danger among the Bentian). In so far as such danger has a recognized referent, it is more commonly categorized as spirit rather than man or animal (the distinction is not always clear though, as spirits often take human or animal form). As among the Land Dayaks (Geddes 1957:7-18), the forest, and the primary forest in particular, is generally considered to be a rather dangerous place associated with spirits, and it is largely for this reason that women and children are discouraged from entering it. However, spirits are conceived of as having "personal familiar territories" and it is especially in certain types of forest locales that one is likely to encounter them (e.g. in marshy or stony places, near strangler figs, or in the small confined areas of primary forest often found around villages that form protected spirit domiciles where swidden cultivation is prohibited). Since spirit encounters, outside of ritual, usually take the form of spirit attacks, and as such attacks, the result and indication of which is illness (sorcery being another common cause of illness), are assumed to be very common, we can understand that fear of spirits, like of people, put important restrictions on movement in the forest, especially if we also consider that violation of spirit territories forms one of the most common recognized causes of spirit attacks, together with breach of social norms. On the other hand, the danger associated with the forest also contributes to an aura of authority ensuing from forest familiarity, and so works in the interest of some community members who face it and are seen as having stronger souls than other people.

Forest knowledge and familiarity, both which result from practical association with the forest, are sources of authority (and of prestige, and envy) both in their own right and by being important means toward gaining authority. In the latter respect they contribute significantly to hunting skills (not surprisingly, it is usually not young hunters who are the most successful), and by providing better access to various, usually erratically occurring forest products (e.g. *gaharu*, honey, fruits), and hence, potentially, to cash income, which is important especially as a source of esteem in the eyes of women who themselves have quite limited opportunities of obtaining cash. For the *manti*, who receive much of their status from being responsible for the distribution of community lands, forest familiarity is essential for knowing community history, which may, in a quite concrete way, be seen as inscribed or embedded in the social landscape. For a young

family, having the knowledge and practical skills demanded to keep a swidden and provide for themselves and their relatives is a prerequisite (although not yet a guarantee) for obtaining adult status and a minimum degree of autonomy. Even for a *belian*, forest knowledge is essential, in order, for example, to conduct the shamanic soul search journeys which are a principal feature of *belian* rituals. Journeying, in a more worldly sense, or walking about in one's familiar territories (both activities referred to by the same term, *malan*) is also the prototypical form of practical association with the land, and the basis for productive forest management and more instrumental forms of land use. Understandably then, men frequently travel somewhere or walk about in the forest with no very clear purpose, or multiple ones, (although some quite concrete objective is always provided upon departure), and they tend to be eager to recount, in somewhat standardized form, their experiences of such endeavors to other men upon returning or when meeting after some time away from each other.

The Dual Pattern of Bentian Settlement

Having given some basic information on the Bentian subsistence pattern and their relationship to the forest environment, I will now consider some other elemental aspects of life in their local milieu, that is, their settlement pattern and way of habitation, which, like subsistence activities, are central in transforming the natural environment into social terrain.

The Bentian can be said to practice a dual type of residence, that is, they stay for part of the time in villages and part of the time in farmhouses on their swidden fields. Until the late nineteenth century they did not live in nucleated villages but alternated residence between farmhouses and solitary extended family houses/small longhouses.[56] As notions of settlement associated with earlier forms of settlement continue to influence now prevailing types, I will here describe both historical and present patterns. This entails a discussion of modes of dwelling as well as group and community organization. I will pay particular attention to Bentian houses because of their centrality in the Bentian system of

[56] In the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, residence for some Bentians became in fact tripartite rather than dual: divided between farmhouses, extended family houses located somewhere in the forest, and village *lou*. Tripartite residence also characterizes some families today, who own a farmhouse and a small single-family village house, and in addition sometimes stay in a village *lou*. Although associated with a very different ecological setting, a similar residential pattern evolved among the Semporna Bajau Laut after they abandoned sea nomadism and began to construct permanent pile-house villages in the second half of the twentieth century (Sather 1976, 1997:134-187). In place of an earlier pattern of dual residence, characterized by family fishing groups at sea, and their periodic aggregation at boat moorage sites, a more complex structure of intermediate residential groups emerged, consisting chiefly of village housegroups (*luma'*) and housegroup clusters (*ba'anan*), both of them now primary units of a newly emergent village social organization.

social organization, but also in order to provide some insight into what might be called the phenomenology of Bentian everyday life.

The most obvious implication of the dual settlement pattern of the Bentian is that one cannot understand their lives only from the perspective of the village or, conversely, from the swidden (which may be located anywhere between a few hundred meters up to ten kilometers from the village). Most people divide their time more or less evenly between the two residence categories (although there are also some people who stay mainly in one of them), and life in the one place receives much of its meaning by way of contrast to life in the other. The option — more restricted at certain periods of the year, and more for some individuals than for others — of staying in either the village or on the swidden enables, among other things, a significant degree of flexibility in how to structure one's social network, as does the decision about where to make one's swidden. Part time swidden-village residence also tends to make people's social relations more complex as one often associates with different people in the village and on the swidden.

Bentian Swidden Houses and Clusters

Bentians usually make swiddens in clusters of adjacent fields (*teming*), consisting of about two to five separate swiddens, although there also exists the option of making a solitary swidden. The conjugal couple, or sometimes a widow/widower together with a grown but unmarried child, is the standard swidden-making unit. Each such unit ideally cultivates a separate swidden and frequently also builds a farmhouse of its own which is usually placed somewhere in the midst of the swidden. However, swidden-making units also quite often share farmhouses, particularly in the case of young married couples who tend to stay together with one of the spouses' parents (occasionally also with other relatives), and who at first usually have no separate field of their own, but assist their older co-residents with theirs (which tends to be relatively large in such cases).

There is normally only one hearth in a swidden house and its inhabitants usually constitute one household, eating together, sharing rice and other resources. Bentian swidden houses are generally quite small, between five to eight meters long and three to five meters wide, sometimes with a small semi-detached kitchen at the back or side (see Plate 1). The number of inhabitants is usually between three and ten although there may in rare cases be up to twenty people residing in a swidden house. The overall impression, even in houses with few residents, is that of a rather crowded space, not the least because of the inhabitants' rice stocks which are kept in large bark bins in the house. The walls of the houses are typically lined with the belongings of the inhabitants, including rattan mats and mattresses which are rolled out at night. The smoke from the hearth often lies thick and blackens the inner roof of the single room which makes up the house. Under

the floor of split bamboo slats hang small chicken cages, and pigs eating kitchen refuse are kept in styes on the ground. Swidden houses are built on house posts about one to three meters above the ground; in the past, when headhunting attacks were anticipated, they could be several meters higher. The house posts are made of either ironwood (a singularly durable wood which can be reused several times as the inhabitants move to new swidden sites) or other, ordinary wood (trees that grow on the spot are often simply chopped off at the appropriate height and left standing to serve the same purpose). Walls are usually made of bark (near the Teweh area sometimes of bamboo or palm thatch) and today also and increasingly of boards. The roof normally consists of wood shingles, sometimes made of ironwood, but more usually of lighter wood. Ironwood was not used as a house construction material (either for house posts or roofing) before the end of the nineteenth century. This is true both for ordinary swidden houses, referred to as *balei ume*, and the larger, longhouse-like structures known as *lou* which today are found mainly in villages and, like practically all present-day village houses, have ironwood house posts and roof shingles.

The houses in a cluster of adjacent swidden fields are usually placed at some distance from each other, in order, among other things, to enable more efficient guarding against marauding monkeys and wild boars. However, the family units making up a swidden cluster frequently visit each other and they also share meat from game caught by their members. Swidden cluster families are expected to help each other, by providing, for instance, participants for rice field workgroups or rituals held by their neighbors. The interdependence expected ensures that people, if possible, make swidden fields next to someone whom they know well and like, preferably a kinsman. The constituent family units of a swidden cluster are with few exceptions related by (bilateral) kinship ties. A common pattern is to share cluster residence with one or several of one's siblings or cousins and their families or one or several of one's spouse's siblings or cousins with families. When one moves to a new location the other families of the same cluster often follow although they may also choose not to do so. One does not usually have the same swidden neighbors throughout one's lifetime, although some people with close relationships stick to each other's company.

The Bentian Lou *as a Building and a Social Category*

As already mentioned, most people do not stay solely in their farmhouses, nor did they do so in the past. In fact, because of the risk of headhunting attacks, exclusive farmhouse residence was sometimes more rare in the past than it is now. Before the time of settlement in nucleated villages, people periodically stayed in solitary *lou,* which like the farmhouses, were located "in the forest," (*saang laang*) frequently on hill tops, and next

to a swidden. However, they would stay there mainly under certain circumstances: at times of ritual (e.g. curing rituals, weddings, mortuary ceremonies), during meetings dealing with community affairs, or if they had a newborn baby or some severely sick family member. For most of the time, the families who recognized themselves as belonging to a particular *lou* would live dispersed and the latter would often be occupied only by some elderly couple and perhaps a single family or an unmarried individual looking after them and cultivating a rice field or garden close by.

Like the swidden houses, such swidden *lou* (*lou ume*) were moved quite frequently (perhaps once in a couple of decades on average), and they were rebuilt at least once a decade which was a necessity because of the impermanent building materials used (see Plate 2).[57] They were often rather flimsy structures — resembling large, rectangular swidden houses, built of the same materials — as were early village *lou*, whose dilapidated condition inspired frequent complaints by Dutch and sultanate visitors (Knappert 1905:627). Like swidden houses they usually consisted of only one large undivided room, thus lacking the walled *bilek* or "compartments" typical of the longhouses in Dayak areas further north (however, each family would occupy a particular space in the house, and would unfold large cotton mosquito nets at night, providing some degree of privacy).[58] They were also quite small in comparison with such longhouses, normally less than thirty meters long. However, some *lou* did have compartment walls (albeit often only a few decimeters high, and not necessarily aligned in an inner row along the back as typical for longhouses), and such partitioned *lou* were often somewhat larger and more solid than the others. The fortressed *lou* built for protection against the Pari, for instance, often conformed to this design, as did some early village *lou* which were built under *manti* with extensive leadership ambitions aiming to concentrate large numbers of followers under one roof. Generally, Bentian *lou* also appear to have been

[57]Small, impermanent swidden multi-family houses like the traditional Bentian *lou* are poorly described in the ethnographic literature on Borneo, as is the social organization of such houses. However, swidden longhouses or multi-family houses are actually not unusual in Borneo but occur among many longhouse-building Dayak groups such as the Maloh (King 1978b:203), Iban (Freeman 1970:161-70), Kayan (Rousseau 1978:80), and Kenyah (Whittier 1978:106-8), pointing to the possibility that the organization in multi-family houses, intermediate to that in farmhouses or longhouse apartments, on the one hand, and villages or communal longhouses, on the other, may have been more widespread than suggested by previous studies, which have tended to focus on the two polar modes of organization. The general importance of this "intermediate level" of social organization among the Bentian, but also among some other Borneo peoples such as the Bajau Laut (Sather 1997:134-187) and, perhaps, the Ma'anyan (Hudson 1978), demonstrates that "extended families" can indeed form social units of central structural significance in Borneo (as such notably not being reducible simply to a phase in the household's developmental cycle) (cf. King 1978a:12-15).

[58] This is not to say that all longhouses in northern Borneo were internally compartmentalized into family *bilik*; an exception being, for example, those of the Kelabit of the Sarawak/East Kalimantan borderlands (see Bala 2002:44-45).

larger and more frequently partitioned in downstream Bentian areas closer to Benuaq territory (and the central Borneo culture area), an indication of influence from these neighbors, who more commonly built such longhouse-like *lou*.

The number of inhabitants belonging to an average-sized swidden *lou* was quite small, usually less than thirty people, consisting typically of a few elderly siblings and their spouses if still alive, and perhaps some three to four of their children with their families, the latter possibly including a few already married children with children of their own. What we might term the core of a *lou* did, in fact, usually consist of a set of siblings (sometimes including classificatory siblings), typically the oldest such set alive. It was from these siblings that the other members of the *lou* traced their membership in it whether through filiation, adoption, marriage, or combinations of such connections, and it was the mutual solidarity (or discord) of these siblings which provided the source for much of the cohesion (or instability) of the *lou* as a whole.

Every *lou* had a *manti* (or, in some cases, several) who in most cases was one of the members of the core sibling set and thus born into the *lou*. The larger the number of inhabitants, the more status did the *lou,* and particularly its *manti,* usually enjoy. And the larger the number of its inhabitants, the more resources, both human and material, the house had to arrange grand rituals (to which people from other *lou* were invited), further adding to its status. However, the logic of the system was such that some of the members of a *lou* were likely to marry out and hence likely to become associated with other *lou* (the members of a sibling set, for instance, seldom all remained in their natal *lou*). Whether they would do so or not was in large part determined by the persuasive powers of its *manti*, as well as the number of inhabitants of the *lou* (a populous *lou* enabled marriage with first and second cousins within the *lou*, a generally preferred practice). Bentian marriage, according to customary law and continuing practice, is ambilocal — initially uxorilocal and secondarily virilocal — which means that there always existed some degree of tension between the two sets of parents of a couple, especially if they were from different *lou*: where the couple were to end up staying most of their lives was always more or less uncertain. For the same reason, and in part also because of the Bentians' low fertility and high infant mortality rates (even today, about a third of all couples are barren or produce only one child, and about as many of the children die shortly after birth), the population balance of a *lou* (or a village) has always been precarious, and the struggle for people, for manpower, followers, and allies, has always been a central concern on all levels of Bentian group politics, as it generally seems to have been in Southeast Asia (see Reid 1983:8, 1988).

The constituent families of a *lou* often made swiddens in clusters, as they continue to do today. However, people also sometimes made and continue to make swiddens together with outmarrying relatives resident in other *lou*. Bilateral kin networks (e.g. kindreds, which include both cognatic and affinal kin) intersect in important ways with

housegroup boundaries and we should not overemphasize the distinctness of this essentially fluid and porous social category. In fact, for many people at any particular time (and certainly over a longer period of time) it would be appropriate to speak about multiple *lou* membership, or of contextual *lou* identity. How many people actually belong to a particular *lou*, then, has to some degree always been a matter of definition and viewpoint. Still, we should recognize the important fact that the members of a *lou* often were and are referred to as *erai aben* or *erai buhan* ("one family"), indicating that they form an internally related group, which indeed has always to a greater or lesser extent been the case (although amalgamation of groups previously unrelated has at times occurred). Furthermore, even though *lou* are markedly fluid in practice, they are typically talked about *as if* they were quite solid and stable social entities, and there is normally a core of members for whom *lou* identity is an unambiguous matter (often these core members, typically members of core sibling sets, have descended directly from the founders of the *lou*). We should also understand that there is, like in swidden houses, usually only one hearth in a *lou*, and that the constituent families in some important respects form one household while in the *lou* (e.g. by eating together and sharing food, although not, for instance, by sharing rattan sales income), even if they form different households on their swiddens. The *manti* of a *lou* also exerts a considerable degree of authority over its families (over decisions about where and with whom to farm, for instance), whose autonomy is thus significantly restricted.

One thing which has particular significance in bringing the families of a *lou* together as a collectivity is the fact that the *lou* is seen as the proper place for rituals. Even if single family households could hold and continue to hold curing rituals in farmhouses (or single family village houses), it was still preferable to hold them in the *lou*, and the performance of other rituals can even be said to have demanded the use of a *lou*. This is so not only for the somewhat simple reason that farmhouses are not large enough to accommodate the large number of participants attending the larger rituals (often up to fifty people or more). Notions of *lou* as ritual houses also reflect notions of propriety which ultimately express the important fact that *lou* are associated with the ancestors. A concrete manifestation of this association is the *longan*, an ungainly wooden structure consisting of some four to eight ironwood poles holding up a shelf on which certain ancestral objects are stored (see Plate 10). A *longan* used to be part of most *lou*, and it can be said to have formed the ritual center of the *lou*, or, in James Fox's (1993:1) words, "the ritual attractor." Interestingly, this structure, around which most ritual action concerned with ancestors takes place (and in the proximity of which also skulls from certain prominent ancestors are stored), used to be seen as the mark and defining characteristic of a *lou*, and *buntang* "thanksgiving" rituals including water buffalo sacrifice prescribed its use, and thus the use of the *lou*.

A *lou* is, in a sense, like the holy house of the Malagassy Zafimaniry, "a place where one goes to obtain the blessing of ... the ancestors" (Bloch 1995:80), although we should add that one goes to the *lou* for such purposes almost exclusively in the context of ritual. The capacity of a *lou* for providing such blessings lies in the continuity between the living and the dead which it is seen to embody most specifically in the *longan* (which should be at least several generations old, and is typically claimed to be extremely old) and the ancestor skulls and other ancestral objects stored nearby and above it, in the rafters. Continuity is in fact itself a defining characteristic of the *lou*; as a man explained to me, it is not enough for a house to be large for it to be a *lou* (in fact, many *lou*-sized swidden houses were not given recognition as *lou* by informants), many people must have been born and died in it before it becomes one. A similar factor sometimes mentioned as a measure of sufficient continuity defining a *lou* was that it must have been in the same location long enough for the coconut palm to begin to bloom (minimally six years). An expression of the importance of continuity as a criterion for *lou* status is also the fact that even ordinary-sized farmhouses could sometimes be loosely labeled as *lou* by informants, providing that they had been long-lasting enough. However, the people likely to regard such houses as *lou* were, significantly, those for whom they had served the social function of *lou*, that is, functioned as a house where several family units gather as one — others were likely to dismiss such buildings as "just farmhouses" (*blai ume maha*). This indicates how the term *"lou"* often has some connotations of "home," that is, indicating a place of long-term residence and/or of origin, where one is more "at home" than elsewhere.[59]

The constituent families of a "traditional" Bentian *lou* can be said to have formed a minimal community. The integration of this community is heavily dependent on factors which can be classified as religious. Not only did its members come together mainly during rituals, but they also entered a soul house (*blai juus*) at the conclusion of *buntang* rituals. A material copy of the soul house was hoisted up into the rafters of the *lou,* and an invisible counterpart of the soul house provided protection for the members' souls at a special location in the heavens. Continuity with the ancestors was provided by the *longan* and the ancestral objects which were associated with particular spirits acted as protectors of the *lou*. When a *lou* was moved, these objects were re-installed in the new *lou*, and building materials were also commonly reused on such occasions, especially

[59] In this connection it may be relevant to report on a somewhat special meaning that the term *lou* has taken on in the village of Benangin on the Teweh River, where the word is said to be no longer regularly used for houses, but instead mainly to refer to the village, as when people talk about "going down to the *lou*" (*dolui la lou*) when they return to the village from their swiddens in the surrounding hills. This usage points to the term's connotations of home and also to the traditionally strong association between a *lou* and a particular place, expressed further by the fact that *lou* were usually named after some particular location or feature of the landscape (e.g. a hill, a valley, a stream, a waterfall, or a fruit tree or some other sort of tree occurring at the location where the house was built).

after ironwood became employed for *lou* construction. Largely as a result of these factors, the members of the *lou* community acquired a sense of unity and distinctness transcending the solidarities provided by the kin relations of which it was composed. It became a "house," in the sense of a family, for which residential association as much as descent or kinship provided the source (even if not the principal idiom) of notions of relatedness.

Bentian Society as a House Society

It may be illuminating to liken Bentian society to a "house society" in Claude Lévi-Strauss' terms, if applying this concept somewhat loosely, as advocated by Waterson (1995). In this understanding, the term basically refers to a society in which the house is a central social institution and cultural concept. Such an understanding takes as its starting point Lévi-Strauss' definition in *The Way of the Masks* (1983:174) of the house as "a corporate body made up of both material and immaterial wealth, which perpetuates itself through the transmission of its name, its goods and its titles down a real or imagined line, considered legitimate as long as this continuity can express itself in the language of kinship or of affinity and, most often, of both," but it is not so much concerned with Lévi-Strauss' later development of the term (1987a, 1991), according to which hierarchy and inequality are inherent features of such house societies (as a logical, if not empirical conclusion of the house's transmission of goods and immaterial property).[60] The focus here is on what Waterson (1995:49-50) refers to as the key features of Lévi-Strauss' above definition: "the ideal of continuity," "the passing down of some form of valued property," and "the strategic exploitation of the language of kinship and affinity."

In the present case, house society refers to a society where the house (the *lou*) is a rather restricted or minimal unit as compared to some of those societies with which the concept is more commonly associated (e.g. the Kwakiutl, feudal Europe, Japan), although it should be remembered that Lévi-Strauss also applied his concept to many Indonesian societies, and that he was expressly concerned with using it to make sense of the apparent lack of order of cognatic societies. Admittedly, the continuity of the Bentian *lou* was also quite limited (*lou* regularly branched off into "daughter *lou*," usually after having been

[60] I am of a somewhat different opinion than Macdonald (1987) and Sellato (1987), for whom Lévi-Strauss' concept is of minimal relevance to unstratified Indonesian societies. Unlike them, however, and like Waterson, I am not so much concerned with whether the society to which the term is applied really fits Lévi-Strauss' concept, as with its heuristic value in using it as "a jumping-off point, from which to examine indigenous concepts" (Waterson 1995:48). To me, the principal value of the concept lies in the general attention it brings to houses — both in the sense of physical structures and conceptual models — as vehicles of social organization, and to the articulation within the house institution of a plurality of principles of social organization.

rebuilt a few times in the same locality), as were perhaps, in a comparative perspective, the material and immaterial properties passed down and managed, principally by its *manti* (i.e. the *longan* and ancestral objects, heirlooms such as Chinese jars and gongs, and rights to land in locations cultivated by its members). However, some amount of valued property clearly was passed down, and Bentian society is definitely a house society in the sense that the house is a central organizing principle and dominant institution in the society, as well as in the sense that relatedness based on residential association is typically expressed in the idiom of kinship, even if it is in fact residential association itself which is primary in establishing *lou* unity, or separating different *lou* communities from each other. The house, in this case as in those explored by Lévi-Strauss, is a kin-based category, although it is also clearly more than a kin category (it is not simply a descent category), and the concept of house may thus, in line with Lévi-Strauss' intentions, be taken to serve as a complement to descent for an understanding of social structure, in a manner analogous to how that of the household has been applied to complement kin categories in analyses of Bornean longhouse communities since Derek Freeman's pioneering works (1960a, 1970). In fact, the house concept may also, as I later intend to demonstrate, fruitfully complement the term "household," as its referent does not seem to be as structurally all-important in Bentian society as it appears from studies of other Borneo societies.

Change and Continuity in Bentian Residence and Settlement Patterns

In the nineteenth century, when Bentians began to settle in nucleated villages, *lou* also began to be built in villages. In fact, at first, until the mid-twentieth century, it was only *lou* rather than any single family houses that were built in the villages, often only one at first, but usually supplemented before long by several others. Some of these *lou* were, as already mentioned, particularly large, and some of them were referred to as *lou solai*, large or grand *lou* (see Plate 3). Such *lou* were not only large, but they were intended — at least by the leading *manti* of the community, who were usually responsible for their construction and resided in them — to be buildings where the entire village would gather, and in which rituals for the entire village (i.e. *nalin taun*, an extended *buntang* ritual) would be arranged. These *lou* in time and under the influence of the colonial and national governments became known as *lamin adat*, "*adat* longhouses," a term indicating that they were houses where all major events pertaining to *adat* in the community (i.e. customary law negotiations, larger rituals) were and are expected to be held. However, many extended families continued to live in swidden *lou* until quite recently, while others built *lou* of their own in the villages. Progressively throughout the twentieth century, smaller, single family houses — known since the New Order regime as *rumah pembangunan* (I.,

"development houses") — have also been built in the villages (see Plate 4). During the past ten years, these houses, which are now almost exclusively made of modern materials (planks or plywood) and often painted and equipped with windows, have also begun to be built along the newly constructed roads in the area, a pattern motivated by the opportunities obtained for easier transport of rattan and other exported products.

Today there exist few swidden *lou* in the Bentian and surrounding Luangan areas. There are also rather few traditionally designed *lou* left in the villages, in many Bentian villages just one, in others three or four, and in a couple of villages none (among other Luangan subgroups *lou* are even less common; on the Teweh River, for instance, there are possibly no traditional village *lou* left). Most Bentians do, however, still reckon some form of *lou* membership, although the *lou* to which they now belong often consist of large, modern-styled village dwellings (built of the same materials as single family development houses). These modern *lou* nevertheless serve the traditional function as houses where the constituent families gather, and they are referred to with the same term as their traditional counterparts. However, there are also some families who have no or only a rather loose connection to some particular localized *lou* (although this does not necessarily mean that their kin relations and obligations are any less extensive than those of other community members). In fact, small numbers of weakly (or ambiguously) *lou*-associated single families have probably always existed, even if their number now might be higher than before.

Bentian residences today are significantly different from their residences in the nineteenth century, not the least because present-day *lou*, both modern and traditional, interspersed with single-family houses, are spatially concentrated in villages, thus closer to each other, which implies, among other things, less distance to outmarrying relatives than when swidden *lou* were common, and a weakening of the former association of *lou* with particular swidden areas, in which they used to be located, but from which they are now at a distance. This development has meant that people have simultaneously become both more individualized, living alone on swiddens, or in single family houses; and collectivized, living together in villages, as "one large family," as it is often expressed, while "in between" the extended family — the *lou* category — has lost some of its former importance. Nonetheless, there is still much continuity in residential arrangements and social organization, especially if we look at the inside rather than the outside of houses.

The interior of the present-day Bentian *lou*, whether modern or traditional, is plain and sparsely furnished. Most of it consists of an open space, where large rattan mats are rolled out on the bamboo/rattan/plank floor during rituals or when guests are received. In different parts of the houses along the walls are the sleeping mats and mosquito nets of the inhabitants, and sometimes a four-poster iron bed. Elsewhere along the walls are large ceramic jars, gongs, and piles of white plates — so-called traditional valuables, used mainly as objects of exchange in the context of customary law and ritual — as well

as other things belonging to the inhabitants (boxes containing clothes, drums, spears, fishing nets, half-finished rattan baskets, and perhaps a few wicker chairs and a cupboard). Here and there may hang plaited bamboo trays from the ceiling, on which smoked meat skewers and other food of the inhabitants is kept away from the dogs. On the house posts, which cut through the floor to support the roof, water buffalo horns are usually attached, reminding the inhabitants and visitors of past rituals at which the animals were sacrificed. In some part of the middle section of those *lou* which are known as *lou solai* or *lamin adat* is the *longan*, surrounded by ancestral objects and various ritual paraphernalia. Many present-day Bentian *lou* lack a *longan*; from the beginning of village integration there has been a gradual decrease of *longan* so that there is now only one *longan* in many Bentian villages, while outside the Bentian area among other Luangan subgroups almost no *longan* remain. In the kitchen (*beliku*), which usually consists of a separate building attached to the back of the *lou*, are mainly various kitchen utensils and water containers, as well as the hearth, a wooden frame filled with sand and a few cooking stones, above which firewood is dried on racks. The kitchen often has a separate entrance from the entrance to the rest of the house (which is the one used by visitors), typically located either at one end or in the middle of the lateral side of the *lou*.

Most buildings in present-day Bentian villages are built along the two sides of a single village street that usually runs parallel to a nearby river which serves as the community's bathing place (Bentian cosmology does not, as among some riverine Borneo peoples, demand particular alignments of houses with reference to the river, or the sun). Along this street and elsewhere in the village coconuts palms are a prominent feature. Some distance from the houses is the grave yard(s), in or near which a few bone sarcophagi on piles (*temla, keriring*) are usually found. In the graveyard and in some open areas (*lutar*) surrounding the village browsed by water buffaloes, there are a number of *blontang*, anthropomorphically carved ironwood poles raised during rituals at which water buffaloes — which are tied to them on the occasion — are sacrificed. Domestic pigs, chickens and dogs until recently ranged around unfettered in the villages, which often, especially in the daytime, gave a somewhat abandoned appearance on account of the majority of inhabitants being away on their swiddens, and many of the houses being in a more or less neglected condition. At some central place in the village, usually in the vicinity of the *lamin adat*, is the grove(s) of flower shrubs and bushes (*baang bunge*) which supplies plants used in rituals. In most Bentian villages there is also, as elsewhere in Indonesia, a usually white-painted school, often the largest building in the village. In villages with a large Christian population there are also one or two churches, built of wood in a style resembling traditional American Protestant churches. In the subdistrict capital and some of the larger villages, a few special government buildings serve as offices and lodgings for government officials and visitors. In most villages, one or two

houses also offer retail sales of a restricted variety of market goods such as cigarettes, kerosene, sugar, medicines, and batteries.

Predominantly Christian villages and houses sometimes differ only slightly from the pattern which I have outlined here (principally with respect to certain objects and arrangements associated with the traditional religion which have been abandoned). Christian families differ more from Kaharingan families in that they often stay in the villages. They are generally more concerned about being *maju*, "progressive" — residing on swiddens, "in the forest," is regarded as backward behavior by modern-minded Indonesians — and services and other Christian ceremonies always are held in the village. However, because of the bias of my field experience, this study chiefly involves Kaharingan communities, so the above description can generally be taken to apply unless otherwise stated.

Past and Present Conceptions of Community

The village concept is, as already mentioned, not an indigenous or traditional Bentian concept, or at least, that is how the Bentian themselves see it. The scope of integration in nineteenth century Bentian communities was lower than it is today, and apparently also lower than in most other Dayak societies at the time. As Weinstock (1983a:98) has correctly pointed out, "the inhabitants of a low *solai* [a large *lou*] represented a single family rather than an entire village as in the case of the longhouse dwelling peoples of northern Borneo." However, although the inhabitants of a *lou*, before the time of village settlement, formed a kind of minimal community, they also belonged to a larger community by this time. The members of *lou* in a particular area recognized themselves as belonging to a territorial domain, a *benua*,[61] to which the members of other *lou* in the same area also belonged, and within which people from other areas were not allowed to open up land for cultivation.[62] Together the inhabitants in this area, which was about the

[61] The term *"benua"* has a rather wide field of application. In addition to a territorial domain of a local group it can also be used to designate home or village. It would perhaps be most appropriate to translate the term into English as village, although I have avoided this in order to maintain the Bentian distinction between nucleated villages, which are referred to with the Indonesian term "*desa*," and traditional territorial domains, for which the Indonesian term is not applied. "*Benua*" is, of course, a proto-Austronesian term indicating, in present-day Austronesian languages, a territorial entity of highly variable character, and in some languages, a house (see Fox 1993:12). Traditionally, the term was used by Bentians, for the territorial domain of the community as a whole, and also for the more restricted locality with which a particular *lou* was associated.

[62] Although pre-dating Bentian integration in nucleated villages, village or community territoriality among the Bentian need not have been an originally indigenous concept. On the contrary, it is possible that the concept, like that of nucleated villages, was introduced as the result of coastal influence, but that it became adopted earlier than the latter, perhaps in the early nineteenth century, after the Kutai

same size as present-day village territories and, like the latter, carefully delineated with respect to particular rivers, streams and hills, etc., formed a named, predominantly endogamous social unit which represented the highest level of indigenous political organization, and the most inclusive social category recognized at the time ("ethnic identities," i.e. Luangan subgroup identities, gradually became more widely recognized only as integration with the sultanates and the Dutch colonial government became more instrumental towards the late nineteenth century). Before village integration, the whole region comprising the Teweh River and the areas inhabited by the Bentian and the Benuaq today was divided into such socio-territorial units.

Although normally not residentially concentrated, these local groups or communities (there is no specific indigenous term refering exclusively to the categories in question) at times gathered, and in certain circumstances acted as corporate entities, such as with respect to dealings with other entities of the same order with whom conflicts, settled through payment and exchange of traditional valuables, are said to have been frequent.[63] The typically uneasy relations between these groups, together with their corporate character and dispersed residence, point to their similarity with another Southeast Asian "hill tribe" social category of the same order, the Ilongot *bertran* (Rosaldo 1980). As in the case of the *bertran*, the name of a Bentian local group could be used both as a designation for a group and the territory with which it was associated, and the group typically took its name from a particular locality, which in the Bentian case was often borrowed from the name (and locality) of a particular *lou* which was seen as the "trunk" or "base" (*puun*), while the other *lou* in the same area were regarded as its "branches"

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sultanate had moved to Tenggarong and begun to maintain more extensive relations with the inland. These conjectures would be congruent with Tsing's observations (1984:127-152) on the lack of the principle of village territoriality among the relatively isolated central mountain Meratus, and the application, in some east side Meratus communities, of the same principle based on a notion of "the local community as a small model of the coastal kingdom" (Tsing 1984:136). Similarly, George Appell's (1992:3) remark, concerning the Rungus of Sabah, that "the jural personality of the village had developed over time as land had become scarcer," points in the same direction.

[63] When these "traditional" Bentian communities gathered it was typically not the whole community which would gather, but only the *manti* and perhaps some other elders in the capacity of its representatives, or the kin of an extended family who arranged a *buntang* or *gombok* ritual. However, all or most members of these communities apparently sometimes gathered temporarily in some large *lou* in periods when attacks from the Pari were particularly frequent (for example, the Terieq community, who for some time in the early nineteenth century had seven *manti*, normally associated with separate *lou*, sometimes came together in a large partitioned *lou* for such reasons). It also appears that community wide *nalin taun* rituals started to be arranged in some communities some time before settlement in "proper" villages (*desa*) took place. Some of these rituals were occasions on which the members of some other community were invited (*nuak*) and offered valuables, and, in accepting the invitation, became committed to return it in equal or greater measure at some later stage (i.e. through a new ritual and countergifts).

(*pakaak*).[64] The *lou* in question was often (although not necessarily) the first *lou* established in the area over which the community as a whole made claims. It was frequently used for gatherings during which community affairs were negotiated, and its *manti* were likely to have a special status. It thus appears that some *lou* might have had the status and function of *lou solai* (grand *lou*) already before the time of village integration in that they functioned as houses which in some sense represented the community as a whole — rather than only an extended family. As these *lou* also, like those recognized as *lou solai* or *lamin adat* in the nucleated villages established later, frequently were physically larger than other *lou*, it would appear justified to refer to them, or at least to their village counterparts, in the standard Borneo terminology as longhouses.[65] The existence of these *lou* also makes Bentian society more "house society

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[64] The use of the botanical idiom of trunk and branches follows a pattern widespread in Austronesian speaking societies (Fox 1993:17-20; Waterson 1990:124-29). A division in trunk and branch houses or other residential units categorized through the same imagery seems also to be found among other Dayaks than the Bentian (and other Luangans). For example, Sather (1993:75-78) describes in some detail how the parallel concepts of "base" (*pun*, *pemun*) and "tip" (*ujung*, *puchok*) define relations of ritual precedence between the *bilik* families that make up a Saribas Iban longhouse. Here, the family of the *pun rumah* ("house source"), whose members are generally descended from the house founder and occupy the center apartment, establish their ritual priority by erecting the first ritual house post (*tiang pemun*) during longhouse construction. The resulting relationship between longhouse families and their "source posts" appears in some ways closely analogous to that of Bentian *lou* groups and their *longan*. Moreover, as Saribas families and longhouses hive off, or undergo fission, a distinction is preserved between the original, or "old house" (*rumah lama'*) (or family, *bilik lama'*), and the "new" one(s) created in the process (*rumah baru*, or *bilik baru*). Even though he does not report on the use of botanical metaphors in this connection, Winzeler (1996:3) notes the creation of new villages among the Bidayuh through a division in daughter villages "which in time have their own daughter villages," indicating a pattern structurally analogous to the Bentian distinction between trunk and branch houses. The traditional settlement pattern of the Bidayuh was, incidentally, remarkably similar to that of the Bentian in some other respects as well. First, migrations were not as extensive as among many other Dayaks (e.g. the Iban and Kayan). Second, all types of houses were built of light materials and were frequently far from navigable rivers, often on hilltops. Third, the line of movement among both groups for the last 100 to 150 years has been in a downstream direction, that is, "from higher and more remote locations toward lower and more accessible ones" (Winzeler 1996:3).

[65] The question whether *lou* should be classified as longhouses is a somewhat complex one, although perhaps more of scholarly than native concern. As we already know, the term has a variable referent. Perhaps most basically, it refers to a relatively large house where a group of people, preferably kin, gathers. The Bentian use it for all their larger houses, whether divided into internal apartments or unpartitioned, modern or traditional, insofar as they serve this function. In terms of this function, *lou* do of course resemble longhouses and it may be noted in this connection that the term *lou* is contrasted with that of *blai* which is the term used for farmhouses and small village houses. However, the scope of integration effected by a Bentian *lou* is undeniably quite restricted when compared to the longhouses of central and northern Borneo, and in distinction to most of these longhouses, the Bentian *lou* were usually unpartitioned. Nevertheless, I am still somewhat uneasy with the view of some authors (Avé & King 1986:52; Waterson 1986:155-56), who contend that there never existed any real longhouses among the Dayaks of southernmost Borneo (i.e. among the Ma'anyan, Luangan, and Ngaju), and who want to make a distinction between the "great houses" used by these Dayaks to house extended families, and the much larger "longhouses," typically housing entire villages, traditionally in use in other parts of the island. In the first place, very large and massive longhouses as opposed to great houses did, at least until the nineteenth century, exist in some parts of southern Borneo

like" in Lévi-Strauss' terms, as it points to the existence in their society of a degree of inter-house hierarchy and of a notion of a house encompassing the whole society (community).[66] As the houses which were thought to stand for the community as a whole in this way were also dwellings for a particular extended family, they can be said to have served a double function. An example of a contemporary *lou* fulfilling this double function is the *lou solai* of Temiang village, the house in which I resided for most of my fieldwork and which forms the setting for some of the events which will be recounted in the following chapters.

In the current situation, the community for the Bentian is largely synonymous with the village. This does not mean, however, that the community divisions of the past have lost all of their former importance. Like Ilongot *bertran* (Rosaldo 1980:226), the social categories making up traditional Bentian communities could be either concentrated or dispersed. If they became dispersed, that is, if their members married out or moved away to other communities, they would eventually disappear. However, even if they dispersed in this sense, they would retain some of their significance for at least some time, because people would recognize descent from these socio-territorial categories, which thus may be seen to have formed also some sort of descent categories, in addition to localized social groups. Membership in these categories was often traced back from some particular founding individuals, typically accredited with supernatural origins and faculties.[67] Today, the importance of these categories as descent categories has possibly

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(see Knapen 2001:85, 88; Miles 1964). The principal reason for my reluctance to accept this view is that I conceive of a continuum between great houses and longhouses. Even though typical "traditional" Bentian *lou* were unpartitioned, quite small, and housed only extended families (i.e. not entire villages), the Bentian did sometimes build much larger and occasionally partitioned houses which were intended to house whole communities. Perhaps more importantly, for the Bentian (and other people familiar with Bentian *lou*) there exists no such distinction. They translate the word *lou* into pan-regional vocabulary as *lamin*, a central Bornean term used throughout East Kalimantan for longhouses. In addition, the term *lou* appears to be cognate with, on the one hand, the terms *levu* and *lebu* used for longhouses by the Lahanan and the Melanau, respectively (see Alexander 1993:33; Morris 1978:41), and on the other hand, "*lewu,*" used by the Ma'anyan for their extended family village houses, which generally are much smaller than Bentian *lou* (although Hudson notes that *lewu* families used to be larger prior to World War II) (Hudson & Hudson 1978:215,223,232).

[66] However, it should not be assumed that the integration of a traditional Bentian community was always seamless, or that the subordination of all its *lou* to that of the "leading *lou*" necessarily was unequivocal. There were families who were only loosely associated with a particular *lou*; there were also *lou* which were marginal to the community to which they "officially" belonged, or ambiguously associated with several communities.

[67] Some of these individuals are even believed to have been spirits originally, more precisely, representatives of the heavenly *seniang* who descended to earth and thus gave rise to these local groups and descent categories. These *seniang* were typically descended in special "trays" (*kelangkang, langkar*) suspended from chains, some of which were reputedly made of gold. The first sultan of Kutai was allegedly also descended in such a container (see Adham 1981:130), as was a famous Tunjung ancestor whose child married into the Kutai royal family (Tromp 1889:280). In Borneo, founders of Ot Danum local groups (*utus*) also originate from heavenly beings descended in similar carriers (Pascal

become even more important than before despite the fact that as a result of intermarriage most of them are now dispersed over several villages (or make up only part of a village together with another such category) and there remain only a few predominantly "pure" villages, that is, villages which consist mainly of descendants from one category. What has happened today is that the distribution of local groups in the nineteenth century preceding village integration has become frozen. The divisions of that time now stand as a model of the traditional order and people phrase claims of original rights to land in terms of this order.

Couderc, personal communication, 2003). Similarly descended mythological founders are reported also from elsewhere in Indonesia (see e.g. Beatty 1992:186).

3. Kinship Authority: The Cement of Interpersonal Attachments

Introduction

The subject of this chapter is kinship authority, that is, the authority that people exercise by invoking relatedness. More precisely, it is about the ideological obligations and expectations associated with notions of relatedness as sources of authority in Bentian social life, and about how authority deriving from these sources affects people's perceptions, dispositions, and actions. Kinship is a force of fundamental social significance among the Bentian. However, what I subsume under the heading "kinship" includes a rather broad range of phenomena. It encompasses, besides cognatic relations, also affinal ones as well as relations based on residential proximity. To give a working definition of the concept as it is used in this chapter, "kinship" encompasses all those relations for which Bentians apply kinship terminology. Thus, it is not only the authority of kin over kin, in a strict sense, which I will consider, but also, the authority that cognatically and affinally unrelated villagers command over each other by virtue of recognizing relatedness on the basis of proximate residence or friendship. In fact, what I label "kinship authority" could perhaps be described as "local interpersonal authority." Rather than use this somewhat awkward term, however, I will talk about "kinship authority." Extending the semantic field of the term "kinship" in this way is motivated by Bentian notions of relatedness: kinship provides the basic idiom in which local social relations are conceived, and unrelated individuals are often referred to by kinship terms or as *kaben*, "relatives," and interacted with according to the same principles. Through this semantic extension I attempt to establish a closer fit between the concept and local conceptions of relatedness, and to avoid an approach proceeding from an analytical *a priori* understanding of what kinship is. In opting for such an usage of the term I am influenced, in particular, by Janet Carsten (1995a, 1997) and Robert McKinley (1983, 2001) but also, in some respects, by David Schneider (1984). Like Schneider I reject the sharp distinction between "biological kinship," on the one hand, and "social kinship," on the other, that he argues has conventionally been made in anthropology (1984:189). However, unlike Schneider, and like Carsten and McKinley, I do not, in Carsten's (1997:290) words, "reject the validity of kinship as a cross-cultural category," nor use of the term "kinship" for such notions of relatedness which transcend the realm of kinship when narrowly defined. Like them I find it appropriate, and consider it fruitful from a comparative point of view, to use the term kinship to refer to the "the relatedness that people act and feel" whether or not it is as centrally based on notions of procreation as

it is in Western societies (Carsten 1997:290), in so far as it is, predominantly or partly, *couched* in a genealogical idiom.

What I call "kinship authority" is also essentially local authority in some further respects. It consists of such authority as is basically a function of local social organization, that is, which arises from the ways in which local social relations and interaction are organized. Moreover, it pertains predominantly to relations within and between particular families, housegroups and communities, that is, to local relations, and it is predominantly local in derivation (i.e. it does not to a significant degree reflect influence from ideologies or models of social organization originating outside the local society). In these respects it contrasts with what I call "political authority," which derives to a significant extent from relations with agencies outside the local society (i.e. from relations with coastal peoples and past and present governments), as well as with what I call "religious authority" — at least if what is understood by "the local society" here is the presently living human one — which is derived from relations with so-called supernatural agencies.

A story recounting the stay of a young man in the village where I did most of my fieldwork will provide the principal case material as well as something of a general context for my discussion of kinship authority in this chapter. Rather than attempt to establish a systematic and comprehensive presentation of this subject, I have chosen to introduce it gradually as aspects of it become invoked by this piece of empirical material.

A central theme in the story, and an important element in Bentian social life more generally, is the tension between people's aspirations for individual autonomy and their interpersonal or collective attachments. This tension is largely the result of contrary attempts by Bentians at exerting authority, on the one hand, and evading it, on the other. Its existence points to some seemingly paradoxical features of Bentian social life which, despite their apparent incongruence, are characteristic of it. These features include the facts that boundaries between Bentian social groups and categories usually are permeable, and the groups and categories themselves seldom are mutually exclusive or residentially concentrated, while at the same time — despite these indications of individual autonomy and organizational fluidity — an ethos of moral community unity pervades attitudes toward social relations, and even temporary congregations often exhibit corporate qualities. Thus, even though individuals and households could be said to possess a rather high degree of (structural) autonomy in Bentian society, people are nevertheless quite strongly connected in practice, and frequently also constrained by their collective attachments, especially by the intricate webs of their extensive kin relations. How can we make sense of this? How can such simultaneous expressions of autonomy and interdependence be explained? Or to phrase the question in a more well-known (and perhaps somewhat outdated) form: how can we account for social order or social cohesion in such a "loosely structured social system" (Embree 1950)? This question

represents a secondary line of inquiry which I hope to address through my analysis of Bentian authority.

In addition to the tension arising from Bentian efforts at exerting and evading authority, there is also another type of tension forming a central element in the story to be presented. This is the tension arising from the continually ongoing negotiation of social boundaries and otherness, which is present even within small communities formally regarded as all kin. Even though Bentian kinship can be held to be basically inclusive, and co-villagers frequently voice the idea that they are "one family" (*erai aben*), processes of differentiation and exclusion also operate in Bentian society. An illustration is the fact that notions about sorcery (*egau*) and poisoning (believed to be effected by spiritually potent oils, *ompan*) often critically influence people's attitudes toward each other. An alleged instance of sorcery which forms a significant ingredient in the story serves to demonstrate this fact, and enables us to examine some of the ways in which the negotiation of social boundaries are conducted within what in discourse is usually emphatically portrayed as seamless wholes. In addition, this illustration of "the reverse side" of Bentian notions of relatedness has the advantage of indicating the limits of kinship authority, at the same time as it is precisely such assaults on the social fabric which are particularly instrumental in activating claims of kinship in efforts to integrate people.

A Few Notes on Bentian Kinship

Before I proceed to the story, I shall give a brief account of some basic features of Bentian kinship (Appendix 1 gives a list of kinship terms). The Bentian have bilateral inheritance and generally reckon kinship bilaterally, although some men keep patrilineal genealogies, tracing them to powerful ancestors.[68] Marriage is mainly monogamous, but polygamy, both polygyny and polyandry, also occurs (as polyandry is not permitted by Indonesian law, however, all polyandrous unions are unofficial and more or less secret

[68] Patrilines, assumably uncommon in typically bilateral Borneo, are also reported for the Lun Dayeh (Crain 1978:130-31) and the Selako (Schneider 1978:67). Among the Bentian, some women (i.e. shamans) also occasionally trace matrilines. Generally, there seems to be a vague sense in which unilineal connections are conceived of as more direct and powerful than bilineal ones, possibly as a result of sultanate influence. The importance of these unilineal connections, however, seems to be mainly restricted to spiritual powers. Unilineal connections are allegedly not superior to bilineal connections with respect to inheritance or any legal matters, even though they may be invoked in such contexts. Jerome Rousseau (personal communication, 2004) suggests that these genealogies may in fact be bilateral same-sex pedigrees, but it appears to me, from the limited information that I have on such genealogies, that this is not the case among the Bentian.

affairs).[69] Divorce and remarriage, including sororate and levirate, is frequent, and people often remarry many times. Endogamy is preferred and it was more common in the past when marriage usually was restricted to within one's community. First cousin marriage is allowed and fairly common; second and third cousin marriage used to be the norm and is still largely so. Postmarital residence, in theory and in most actual cases, is initially uxorilocal and secondarily virilocal.[70] Due to the dual settlement pattern of alternating swidden-village residence and recurrent visits between relatives, household size and composition vary and fluctuate considerably. In the villages, swidden households typically merge into larger ones sharing an "extended family house" (*lou*). Reflecting the vaguely defined character of Bentian kin entities, the Bentian term for a household or family unit, *aben*, is used for all varieties of residentially concentrated kin groups, and it may be extended to entire villages (or several adjacent ones) by villagers who want to emphasize their closeness or the fact that most of them are related (through cognatic, affinal, or adoptive links). Personal "kindreds," including affines, and sometimes unrelated neighbors, are crucially important as action groups and cut through the boundaries of residentially concentrated kin and other groups. What emerges from a consideration of these patterns is a picture of a fluid and variably composite social system where residence and kinship combine to effect a highly flexible organization which would seem to allow much room for choice and strategical manoeuver in interpersonal alignments. However, kinship in this society represents a highly influential source of authority which can effectively be used to counteract attempts at far-reaching autonomy and bind dispersed community members together.

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[69] Although polyandry is generally regarded as rare outside the Himalayan region, polyandrous unions are reported from several societies in Borneo (Lumholtz 1920:440; Rousseau 1990:227; Sellato 1994:156; Tsing 1993:130) as well as from peninsular Malaysia (Howell 1989:28). Interestingly, these references are all either to hunters and gatherers or highly dispersed swidden cultivators, suggesting that the institution, and polygamy in general in these societies, may reflect concerns with optimizing the reproductive potential of the groups in question (Sellato 1994:156; Knapen 2001:126) and enabling local endogamy. In addition, my own data suggest that ideological concerns with maintaining previously established relations and having no one stay alone also motivate the institution.

[70] The duration of the periods of uxori- and virilocal residence is largely the result of negotiation and practical considerations, although some ideal and standard lengths, varying between villages, were also given (e.g. four years of uxorilocality followed by two years of virilocality). Virilocal residence is not fully as often realized in practice as uxorilocal residence and has to be enacted through an official visit by the man's family. Both types of residence may be avoided through compensation. Immediately after the wedding ceremony, before actual uxorilocal residence is established, the couple also stays first some eight days with the bride's parents, then some four days with the man's parents (here again the exact length of the different stays may vary in different areas and the order is sometimes reversed). Usually, two weddings are also arranged, one by the groom's family, one by the bride's, and both families present "traditional valuables" (ceramic jars, gongs, and plates) to the other, the value of the groom's family's prestations normally being double to that of the bride's (e.g. five dozen plates versus two and a half). The principal purpose of all of these arrangements seems to be to ensure connection and complementarity, especially a fair balance of expenses.

The Story of Udin

Udin was a young man who married into Temiang,[71] the small Bentian village in which I resided for most of my fieldwork. Udin, at the time that I knew him, was a person who may be described as cheerful, sociable and outgoing, all traits which were not always particularly manifest among Bentians that I knew. He could also be characterized as something of a dreamer with occasional ostentatious tendencies. He came to Temiang from Bermaung, a village located on the Teweh River some two to three days' walk from Temiang, on the other side of the provincial border.[72] Out of about 90 people living in Temiang or on swiddens within its territory in 1996, 10 were born in Bermaung. Temiangers have been intermarrying with people from a particular hamlet of Bermaung for over a hundred years, although it is only more recently, especially during the past two decades, that intermarriage has become more frequent.

Udin first came to Temiang in 1990, looking for temporary work to earn some cash (*elo usaha*).[73] He was then in his early twenties. He stayed in Temiang with Nen Bai, his mother's second cousin (who had married into the village a couple of years earlier), and her husband Ma Dengu, helping them to harvest rattan. During this stay he met a pretty girl (Rosa) with whom he did not, however, establish a relation at the time. He was then married to another girl in Bermaung, so he returned home after a few months, but got divorced shortly after. In 1993, three years later, Udin met Rosa again, this time when she came to Bermaung to visit relatives in the company of her mother's first cousin, Ma Bure, and his wife Nen Simur, Nen Bai's sister, who had married into Temiang "following" Nen Bai (Rosa, whose own parents frequently stayed away from Temiang in her father's

[71] Temiang, and Bermaung and Datai Munte (see below) are not the real names of the villages in question but pseudonyms. Udin is also a pseudonym. However, most other names mentioned in the story or elsewhere in the thesis are not.

[72] It can be mentioned here that Bermaung is not a Bentian village; most of its inhabitants belong to the weakly objectified upper Teweh subgroup of the Luangan and refer to themselves as Dusun-Tawoyan or just Luangan. They nevertheless point out that they and the Bentian are one and the same people, differentiated only by name. For them, as for most Luangans, ethnic differences on this level are insignificant or overridden by loyalties grounded in the sharing of a common language, a common religious tradition, and a basically similar way of life. For the purposes of this paper, I will therefore consider Udin a Bentian, and so was he, for most purposes, considered by the Bentians — as were other non-Bentian Luangans living in Bentian villages during my fieldstay. A prominent feature of life in the region is that people who move to other villages adjust to local customs and practices with what seems like remarkable ease. Rather than insist on difference and emphasize their pasts, people are usually strongly inclined to stress similarities. This is, of course, a common feature of many societies in "plural" Southeast Asia, particularly in the so-called peripheries of the region (e.g. see Carsten 1997; Gibson 1986; M. Rosaldo 1980). In such societies, suppression of differences in origin, often along with suppression of differences in status, work to create a sense of local unity and enable local cooperation.

[73] What he had in mind was not wage labor but primarily an opportunity to help someone gather rattan or *gaharu* wood, and then in return get part of the money when it was sold.

village, had been adopted by, and living with, Ma Bure and Nen Simur since Udin's first stay in Temiang). During this visit, Udin and Rosa started to see each other until "the old folks" (*dali tuha*), that is, Rosa's attendants and Udin's mother (who is Nen Simur's second cousin), saw that the two "had to become married" — it was not like he actually had asked for her, Udin told me. At any rate, Udin could not have married Rosa while still in Temiang because of his first marriage, and also because Rosa was then too young to marry. A short time after the wedding, Udin and Rosa returned to Temiang with Ma Bure and Nen Simur. The next two years Udin worked on a shared swidden site with Ma Bure and Ma Bure's father Ma Lombang. During this period, Liman, Udin's and Rosa's first child, was born.

At this time, and up to 1996 when I stayed most of the year in Temiang, Udin and Rosa alternated residence between their farmhouse, where Rosa's grandmother Tak Rosa also stayed, and the "village longhouse" (*lou solai*) owned by Tak Rosa's brother Ma Bari, the (unofficial) village head. In 1995 Ma Bure and Nen Simur moved to a newly opened transmigration site (called *tran* by locals) located some ten kilometers from the village. Udin continued to work on the same swidden site, now in the company of his friend Mudai, a young Benuaq Dayak who also had married into the village and subsequently had become adopted by a villager (Ma Mar), whose swidden field was adjacent to Udin's and now being farmed by Mudai. Like Mudai, Udin spent much of his time hunting, and he seldom slept in the village, except during larger rituals. Since he was one of the most successful hunters in the village he regularly came by the longhouse with meat to give to its inhabitants and other of his relatives. Then he would usually sit down recounting hunting stories for Ma Bari or Ma Bari's middle-aged sons Ma Kelamo and Ma Isa. Occasionally, if he got large catches, he sold fish or deer to people at *tran*. He also at times brought rice and vegetables to the village. When, for instance, in February 1996 an eight day *buntang* ritual was held for Tak Lodot (Tak Rosa's and Ma Bari's sister, and Ma Lombang's second wife), Udin provided most of the rice consumed by guests and participants. He had clearly become important for several villagers who depended on him to a high degree for their subsistence or entertainment. Acknowledging his increasingly adult status, Kakah Ramat, Ma Lombang's sister's husband and the most highly respected *belian* of Temiang, introduced the teknonym Ma Denia ("Father of the World") for Udin, a name connoting his tendency of always being on the move.[74]

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[74] Luangans, like other Dayaks, have both personal names, and teknonyms which they get when they have children or grandchildren, or when they reach the age when they normally would do so. Female teknonyms take the form of Nen X or Tak X (i.e. "mother of X," or "grandmother of X") while male teknonyms, according to the same logic, read as Ma X or Kakah X. Not all apparent teknonyms are true teknonyms, however. Luangan practice is unusual in that most people get their "teknonyms" not from their children or grandchildren but, instead, from habits, attributes or particular events associated with the namebearer (thus, for example, Ma Pija derived his "teknonym" from his penchant for dried fish, *pija*). Some "teknomymic" names are created from a wordplay, or prosodic likeness, connecting the teknonym to the personal name (thus Ma Lombang derived his "teknonym" from his personal name,

List of Principal Characters in Udin's Story

Udin: The 27 year old protagonist who married into Temiang from Bermaung.
Rosa: Udin's wife.
Tak Rosa: Rosa's maternal grandmother who lived with Udin and Rosa, alternating residence between their farmhouse and her brother Ma Bari's *lou*.
Nen Bai: Udin's mother's second cousin from Bermaung. The woman who accommodated Udin when he visited Temiang the first time.
Ma Dengu: Nen Bai's husband. Acted as *manti* and provided plates for Udin at the *perkara* in Datai Munte. Second cousin and close friend of Ma Bari.
Nen Simur: Nen Bai's sister from Bermaung,. Married into Temiang "following" Nen Bai. Adopted Udin's wife Rosa together with her husband, and accommodated Udin and Rosa the first few years of their marriage, before moving to the transmigration camp.
Ma Bure: Nen Simur wife. Cousin of Rosa's mother.
Ma Pija: Rosa's father. Originated from a Benuaq Dayak village where he and Rosa's mother spent much time.
Ma Pile: One of the *manti* who spoke and provided plates for Udin at the *perkara* in Datai Munte. The first from Bermaung to marry into Temiang. Father of Ma Bubu who was married to Tak Lodot's granddaughter.
Ma Lombang: The outspoken *manti* and *warah* who was caught between his conflicting loyalities to Udin and Nen Pare's family at the *perkara* in Datai Munte. Father of Rosa's adoptive father Ma Bure. Adoptive father of his dead brother Ma Resa's children Nen Pare and Nen Bujok. Took an active part in Udin's and many other people's lives in the village.
Tak Lodot: Ma Lombang's wife.Grandmother of Nen Bubu in whose household she and Ma Lombang periodically stayed
Nen Pare: The woman who Udin was accused of having made ill through sorcery.
Ma Mar: Nen Pare's first husband, originally from a Teweh river village. Adoptive father of Mudai.
Ma Sarakang: Nen Pare's second husband. Ma Lombang's deceased sister's son.
Nen Bujok: Nen Pare's unafraid sister who spoke for Nen Pare at the *perkara* in Temiang.
Ma Putup: Nen Bujok's husband who had married into Temiang from another Bentian village. A *belian* known for his unusual spirit familiars
Mudai: The young Benuaq Dayak man who was Udin's friend and swidden neighbor.
Ma Bari: The owner of the *lou solai* of Temiang. Unofficial *kepala adat* and the most high-ranking *manti* of the village. Brother of Udin's wife's grandmother Tak Rosa and Ma Lombang's wife Tak Lodot . Acted as *manti* and provided plates for Udin at the *perkara* in Datai Munte and led the negotiations (*musyawarah*) in Temiang during which it was decided that Udin was to stay in the village.
Ma Isa: Ma Bari's son. Shared a swidden with Udin toward the end of his stay in Temiang.
Ma Kelamo: Ma Isa's younger brother. Udin's friend and the most successful hunter in the village. Father of Ena who was married to Udin's friend and third cousin Mohar.
Mohar: Nen Bai's son, born in Bermaung prior to her marriage with Ma Dengu.
Kakah Ramat: The old and respected *belian* who gave Udin his teknonym and who spoke, along with Ma Dengu and Ma Bari, during the negotiations in Temiang. Married to Ma Lombang's sister.
Ma Busek: The *kepala adat* of Datai Munte.
Nen Udin: Udin's mother from Bermaung.

Mangong, because of the auditory semblance between Mangong and Lombang). Once teknonymic designations have become established, most people are usually addressed by them rather than by their personal name. However, personal names continue to be used for address of persons on a lower generational level than the speaker, and sometimes also for people on the same generational level and of the same approximate age as oneself (although not for affinal collaterals who must be addressed with kinship terms). For people on a higher generational level, one is not allowed to speak personal names but must use teknonyms or preferably kinship terms for address.

In late March the same year, returning from a trip downstream, I was surprised to find a large number of people from Temiang gathered in the house of Ma Busek, the head of customary law (*kepala adat*) of the neighboring village of Datai Munte (of which Temiang officially is a subvillage), in the middle of a lawsuit case (*perkara*). Joining them, I found out that the case concerned an attempt at seeking compensation for sorcery by the family of Nen Pare (Ma Lombang's niece), who accused Udin of having wilfully made Nen Pare sick. After a somewhat hazardous and unavailing trip to consult a doctor in the regency capital of Tenggarong, Nen Pare and her two husbands had "returned upstream" (*uli daye*) with the information that Nen Pare suffered from a "possibly man-made" uterine tumor, although she, being afraid to die away from home, had not submitted to surgery, despite the doctor's insistence that an operation was necessary to save her life. A little later they made their charges against Udin public. They said they suspected him on the grounds of jealousy, a claim which Udin himself and most other villagers found rather incredible, since Nen Pare was his elder by many years, as well as disreputable because of her marital affairs.

The scene was one of emotional uneasiness and suspense, but also one of strained formality. Attendants sat on white plastic chairs along the walls in the front room of the modern-styled building where pictures of the president, the governor, Jesus, and vaccination campaign posters decorated the light veneer walls. The head of customary law sat at his desk in the middle of the room with piles of white plates laid out on the floor in front of him. Outside on the veranda, women seated on benches peered in through the windows. Tea brought in by Nen Pare's sister, Nen Bujok, was served, but no one touched it, except Nen Bujok herself, the head of customary law, and the anthropologists.

Many of the people assembled in the house were markedly uncomfortable with the situation, their eyes fixed on the floor or their faces hidden in their hands, looking as if they were in mourning. More awkward than any other, perhaps, was Ma Lombang, who had close relatives on both sides, but who was assigned to speak for Nen Pare. Most people talking were older or middle-aged men with *manti* or near *manti* status, but Nen Bujok forcefully defended her sister in her and her husbands' absence. Ma Bari and Ma Pile (an older man cognatically related to Udin who had been the first in a series of people from Bermaung to marry into Temiang) spoke for the accused, who tried to counter the charges by pointing to Nen Pare's polyandrous marriage, indicating that it could be the real cause of her disease.[75] Marital status, or its lack, was probably also the

[75] As Nen Pare's marriage with her second husband Ma Sarakang had not been ceremonially sanctified (as remarked above, polyandrous alliances are unofficial and sensitive affairs, where only one of the spouses, usually the first, is recognized), it could be seen as an illicit and immoral relation breaching *adat* (customary law) — and thus an offence for which fines could have to be paid — as well as a potential source of personal misfortune, which explains why Udin wanted to draw attention to the matter.

reason for the absence of Nen Pare's second husband, Ma Sarakang, and the partial absence of her first husband, Ma Mar (Udin's friend Mudai's adoptive father). Nen Pare herself was at the time already too sick to walk.

After a night's break for sleep, the negotiations continued the following day, and within a few hours the verdict was declared by the head of customary law. It was established that Udin had to pay ten dozen white plates to Nen Pare, while he himself would receive nothing. So that Udin would not feel hurt or unfairly treated, four older men — Ma Bari, Ma Pile, Ma Lombang and Ma Dengu — offered to supply these plates to Nen Pare for him. At the beginning of the negotiations the two parties had each paid five dozen plates as deposits; two dozen of these were now given to the head of customary law as compensation for leading and housing the negotiations, four were distributed among those *manti* who had tried to resolve the conflict by speaking (the same persons who provided Udin with the plates that he had to pay), and the remaining four were returned to Udin and Nen Pare. In sum, this meant that Udin had to pay three dozen plates (in expenses), while Nen Pare received seven dozen. No explicit reason for the verdict was given, nor was it explicitly proven or stated that Udin had conducted sorcery against Nen Pare. To guarantee consent to the verdict, the deliberation was closed in customary fashion when the people involved and others present, led by a *belian,* held on to a spear while scattering some rice, thereby addressing the *seniang besarah*, the celestial guardians of customary law. The verdict was also written down on a document signed by the two parties and their representatives (by thumb prints in the case of those who were illiterate).

Despite this formal consent to the decision, many people from Temiang privately expressed doubts about the notion that Udin somehow would have made Nen Pare sick or even wanted her to get sick. Udin himself said that he believed that an event at a ritual arranged by his family might have provoked the suspicions on her part: Nen Pare, who had attended the ritual, had seen Udin come out of the kitchen eating something which he had not offered to others to eat. She had become angry with him and one week later she first became aware of her disease, which eventually was to take her life a few months after the lawsuit.

Although most people did not consider Udin guilty, and many disagreed with the outcome of the negotiations, they nevertheless did not seem particularly surprised about it. Several persons said that they found the verdict understandable because it constituted the solution most likely to enforce harmony in the village. If the decision had been different, Nen Pare and her people would not have been satisfied, and this could have put Udin and others in danger and also could have formed a source of dissension in the village (even if no one suggested it, the spirit familiars and extraordinary shamanship of Ma Putup, Nen Pare's sister Nen Bujok's husband and a stranger from an upriver village with which Temiangers previously had had no relations, was probably a factor

significantly contributing to these views). A week later, Udin announced that he would not be staying in Temiang much longer, and that he intended to return to Bermaung with his wife and child. Notwithstanding the outcome of the deliberations, he did not feel safe anymore, especially not on his swidden (which was much frequented by Nen Pare's husband Ma Mar, visiting the adjacent swidden of his adoptive son Mudai). Despite the contributions of plates by the four benevolent men, he was also hurt and felt that he had suffered injustice. He explained his plans to Ma Bari, who did not, however, support them.

Ma Bari, and a range of other villagers as well, considered it important that Udin should continue to stay in Temiang. Ma Bari's sister Tak Rosa, in particular, greatly depended on Udin (and Rosa) because her only daughter and her daughter's husband (Rosa's parents) only periodically stayed in the village and did not keep a swidden. To Ma Bari himself, although he could largely rely on his sons Ma Kelamo and Ma Isa for rice and meat, Udin had become a personal friend, as he also had with Ma Bari's second cousin Ma Dengu, to whom his occasional meat contributions had a somewhat greater significance. He was perhaps no longer that important in these ways to Ma Lombang who, after his son Ma Bure and Nen Simur moved to *tran,* chiefly turned to his present wife Tak Lodot's grandchild Nen Bubu and her husband Ma Bubu for meat and rice. He and Tak Lodot now often stayed in Nen Bubu's and Ma Bubu's farmhouse, and Ma Lombang also frequently visited *tran* where, in addition to his son, Nen Bubu's younger brother Lodot worked. Like Ma Bari and Ma Dengu, however, Ma Lombang was openly concerned with the low population of Temiang, and just as they were, he was still hoping that one day the village could regain its autonomy and overcome its present status as a sub-village of Datai Munte. This concern of the elders of the community probably also affected their stance in the Udin case.

To resolve the problem, formal public negotiations, led by Ma Bari, were held in the village longhouse. The negotiations began after nightfall and continued until midnight. Udin explained that three years had now passed since his wedding: this was the length of the customary period of initial matrilocal residence that had then been prescribed. He now wanted to return to Bermaung where he was needed by his relatives, especially by his mother (Udin's father was long dead). Ma Bari, Kakah Ramat and Ma Dengu each in turn gave three lengthy speeches in which they discussed the circumstances which in their views necessitated Udin's extended stay in the village. His contributions in hunting wild boar and cultivating rice, banana and cassava were very much needed here, where there were not many young, skillful hunters like himself, whereas in Bermaung, on the other hand, there were plenty of people, and his mother could already count on the aid of several of his siblings. During the course of the evening, no one really defended Udin (and there might have been no one present who wanted him to leave). He himself said very little.

The decision, announced by Ma Bari, was that Udin would be staying two more years in Temiang, and that he was not allowed to visit Bermaung during this time. So that he would not have to fear Nen Pare's people, it was arranged that he was to take his pig and chickens and make next year's swidden with Ma Bari's son Ma Isa at a primary forest site of Ma Dengu's, far away from his present swidden site. As a token of appreciation, one dozen white plates were presented to him by the elders. As he himself afterwards expressed it, there was nothing else that he could do, so he accepted the plates and the terms that went with them. If he had to stay, however, he was going to ask Rosa's father, Ma Pija, to buy him a motorcycle and a chainsaw from the money that Ma Pija expected to receive as compensation for conceding lands in his home village to a mining company, and then he was going to ask Ma Busek, the head of customary law of Datai Munte, to have a logging company operating nearby build a road to Temiang.

The next day Udin came to see me, asking me to help him type a letter to his relatives in Bermaung. He intended to send this letter with Ma Dengu, who would go to Bermaung the following day with his wife's son Mohar, to ask Mohar's brothers to move to Temiang to help Ma Dengu make a swidden next to Udin's. The letter is reproduced below (with the consent of Udin). The first section was written in Indonesian, which is the language that Bentians normally use when writing letters. In the second section Udin, encouraged by me, switched to the local language. Here the tone becomes more straightforward and personal at the same time as the sentences become more typical of spoken rather than written language. His lavish use of proverbs in the third paragraph adds an expressive quality to the text, at the same time as it helps maintain a formal aspect, as does his use of parallelism, evident particularly in the first paragraph. The intent of the letter is twofold: Udin expresses his disappointment at having to stay in Temiang, and asks his relatives to visit him, since he cannot visit them.

Temiang, April 15, 1996

To my Honored Mother, my Younger and Older Siblings, and other Family

Hereby I'm forwarding some brief news, that I had intended to come back to Bermaung, but on Monday night I had a calling from some “adminstrators” (*pengurus, I.*) or “leaders” (*manti*), first and foremost Ma Bari, second Kakah Ramat, and third Ma Dengu. At this time we had a negotiation or arbitration in the “grand longhouse” (*lamin besar*) or *lou solai*. The result of this arbitration was that I was given one piece of jar [equivalent to one dozen plates] to keep me from coming back to Bermaung for a period of two years. That night, beginning from seven o'clock when the programme started, until over one o'clock, I responded to or resisted their argument because I had already promised to get back to the place and the area which I own in Bermaung. But because it was only I who had the intent and goal to come back to Bermaung, because there was no one from Bermaung to pick up me and my wife and child observing the custom of bringing a white plate, well since there was

not that, I just had to lose, contesting their argument at that time, since I was all alone, and they were many people. This accident is not, I feel, my fault, but instead the fault of you in Bermaung, because you were not quick enough to perform the custom mentioned. Now the way to proceed is already closed, there is no way out anymore.

If this letter of mine reaches you, I ask you to write me a letter as well. And in addition to that, I ask you to come and see me over here. I want to meet, first Lende [Udin's older brother], and second my *ayu* [sister's husband] Menari. In the first place, if you are looking for work, there is work: rattan, and there is a price. And what regards the rattan affair at Telisek, they have not paid me yet. So I'm asking you *ayu* to visit soon. Don't wait until month five, first, if you want to collect *gaharu*, there is the tree about which I once told you which to this day still hasn't been felled, and second, to help me work over here, with swidden cultivation or with "business" (*usaha*).

Well, that's all for now, all of the news that I'm forwarding you, so that you'll know. I can't visit yet, I'm kept here by them for two more years. To make swiddens, raise houses, hunt with dogs, wander the forests. So that I would not run off from them, for this year they gave me one piece of jar and prohibited me from visiting. It's like in the saying, the pig is fenced and the cock is caged. Because you were late, you see, if you had come after me then, before I was prohibited by them, I would surely have been able to make a visit. Now I simply don't know how to proceed, but what about the possibility of you coming over here? First of all you, my honored mother, my family and kin, friends and relatives, parent's older siblings, parent's younger siblings, my younger siblings, my older siblings, my uncle Ma Sentikdan, my older uncle Ma Luno, what are your plans? I'm kept here for two years by them, I had been looking forward to come to Bermaung, but — there you have the account from the beginning, the liana-like roots of the sugarpalm, the smoke which presages the flame, the lightning which precedes the thunder. I can't escape, leave the house. The low clouds pass by low, the high clouds pass over high. Well, even though I'm sending this letter it is, as it says, with bleak saliva and a raw tongue because I have no money, cash, bills, coins to accompany the letter. Sometime ago, well, then I had some money, but because there was this problem, well, it's finished. And at this time, I can't do any business. Well, that's all of what I had to tell you in Bermaung, all for now, thanks. Hope it's received.

Udin

After a short delay, Ma Dengu took Udin's letter to Bermaung. Several months passed without Udin receiving news from his relatives. Meanwhile, he worked on his new rice field, felling large trees and slashing undergrowth. Then, in early August, his mother and his preadolescent brother and sister suddenly turned up, to visit him, they said, and to help with the birth of his second child, which Rosa was expecting. They first settled in his old farmhouse, but soon moved into the longhouse. Because of Rosa's pregnancy, Udin too began to sleep most of the time in the longhouse now, hunting every other night with Mohar, who also was staying there after the birth of his and Ena's first child in August. In early October, Udin's and Rosa's second child was born. His mother, who with

her sociable and unreserved ways had become popular with the other women in the village, told me that she was going to stay in Temiang until the harvest (in February-March), while his sister said that they were going to stay for good.

Since it had been raining heavily through August and September, Udin had not been able to clear his rice field through burning yet, and it began to look as if there was not going to be a rice harvest for him that (farming) year. By mid October, most villagers had in fact burned their fields, but Udin and Ma Isa, who unlike the others wanted to make swiddens in primary forest (*alas*) which is more humid than other forest, still had not. Then there was a three day streak of drier weather, which some people saw as their last chance, but Ma Isa, referring to the approaching full moon, declared that it was already too late. Ma Bari then decided that the two should make a common swidden together with Ma Isa's older brother Ma Kelamo, whose own field was quite large, and could be expanded through additional burning at the edges.

One night around this time Ma Bari gave a lengthy monologue addressed to Udin's mother. He gave a detailed chronological account of the events of the past six months, including Nen Pare's lawsuit against Udin and the subsequent negotiations in Temiang. He pointed out how important Udin was in Temiang, and said that it was Udin's "assignment" (*urusan*) to hunt wild boar and deer. After he had finished, Udin's mother delivered a similar report of her situation in Bermaung, focusing on her difficulties as a lone woman trying to raise several children, and her loss of some family valuables which had been stolen. Some time later the two had an argument regarding a large catch of catfish, which Udin had sold to *tran*, without first having distributed shares of it among his relatives.

At the end of October, after an eight day curing ritual had been held for Udin's older child Liman, at which both Udin's family including his mother, and Ma Bari with his wife Tak Ningin, were ritually bathed, Udin began working on his new swidden site. In between he, like most other villagers, joined small workgroups, often including his mother and siblings, planting rice on other people's swiddens. In November, before I went on a trip to Central Kalimantan during which I also intended to visit Bermaung, Udin revealed to me that he too was soon to make a brief visit to Bermaung. His mother had decided to return home after all, and he was to follow her on the way. His visit would probably coincide with mine so we decided that I would ask around for him while in Bermaung.

There was no news of Udin when I passed Bermaung. When I came back to Temiang at the beginning of December, I learned that Udin, Rosa and their children, accompanied by Rosa's parents, had left for Bermaung a few days earlier, and that they were going to stay there for several years, at least. I was told that Udin's mother, who had returned to Bermaung ahead of Udin with some other people, had asked Ma Bari to let Udin go home, and Ma Bari told me that he had conceded, and that there would have been no use

in Udin staying anyway, as his swidden had failed. Udin had, however, already planted rice on his most recent swidden before he left, so it was arranged that Rosa's parents would care for that swidden when they returned to Temiang. In the meantime, it would be tended by Tak Rosa, Rosa's grandmother who, having lived with Udin and Rosa for the past four years, seemed more deeply affected by their departure than anyone else (in fact, all other villagers seemed hardly affected at all). Later, news came to me that Udin and his companions, including his one month old baby, had become lost in the forest, and been held up by a flooded river for several days on their way to Bermaung. When I left Temiang and my fieldwork ended in mid January, Rosa's parents had not yet returned to Temiang.

Following your Kin: The Continuing Significance of Kin Relations

There were many factors and circumstances at play influencing the course of events related in the story of Udin, and chance, as always, certainly played a part in how things turned out. Kinship will be at the center of my attention in the discussion that now follows. There would be other ways to analyze the story, as there would be other ways of telling it. Similarly, the particular way that the story's constitutive events are tied together is largely the result of the fact that it is told from my perspective, that is, the result of how these events appeared to me during and after my own stay in Temiang.

But even though kinship can be said to have been pushed to the fore in the story, kinship also frequently surfaces in Bentian real life experiences more generally. As a result of a strong tendency for endogamy and the system of bilateral kinship reckoning, most and sometimes all social relations that Bentians have are kin relations, that is, relations with either cognatic or affinal kin, or people who are both.[76] Thus, as in many other places around Southeast Asia and the world, people largely live in what you could call worlds of kin, that is, among people who are mostly their relatives. This is made all the more compelling by the fact that kinship provides the basic idiom in which most social relations are understood or at least talked about (even if they are not kin relations, strictly speaking). Kinship is thus centrally salient, both as kin relations and in the form of a flexibly applicable relationship terminology and ideology. This condition probably prevailed to an even greater extent in the past, when the small sub-ethnic local groups into which the Bentian then were divided usually had few marriage or other contacts with

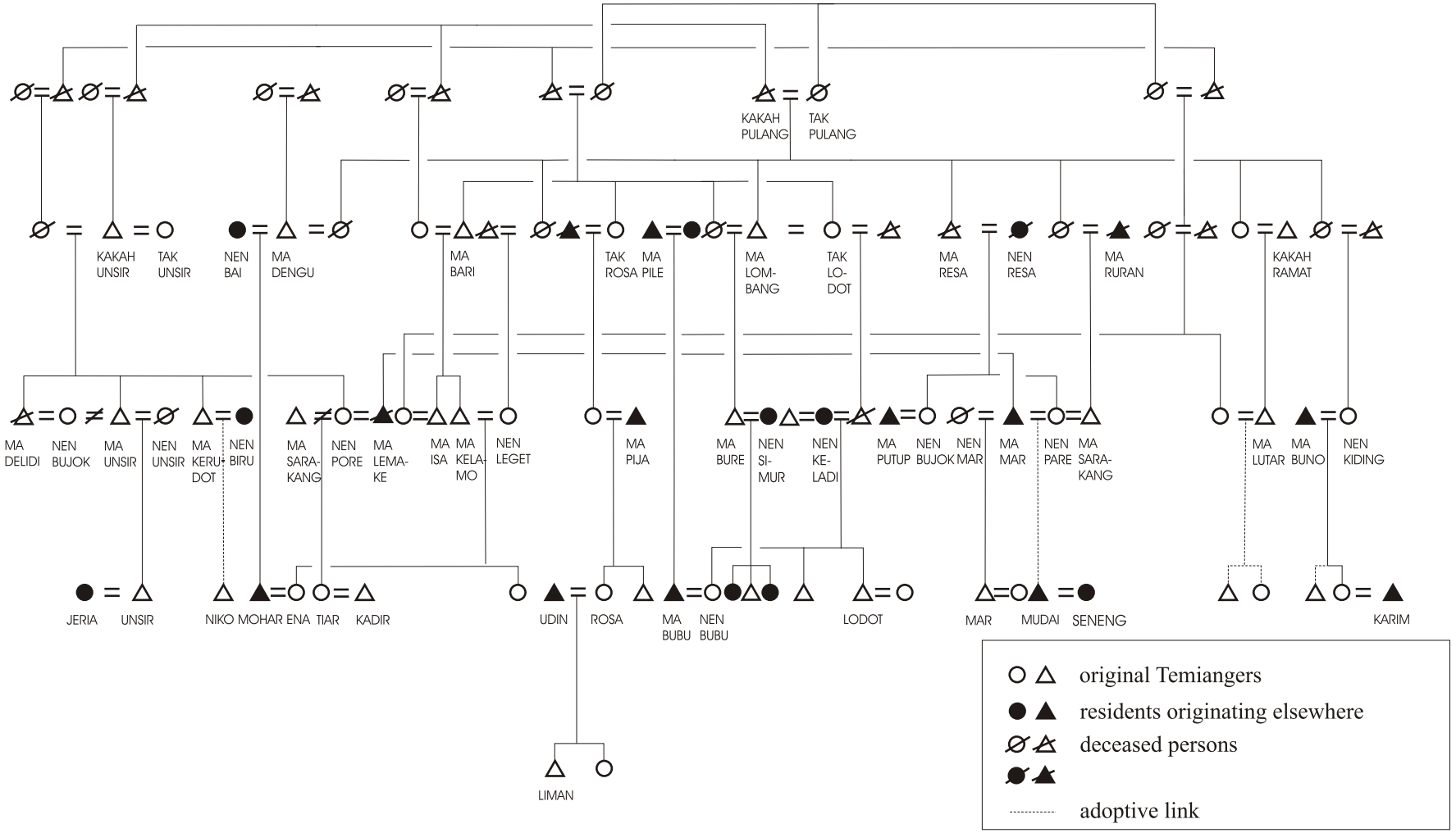
[76] Formally, cognatic kin who become affinal kin initially cease to be recognized as cognatic kin, even though they might still be regarded as such informally. This contrasts with the Bajau Laut, who "attempt, as far as possible, to assimilate affines into appropriate categories of kin relationship" (Sather 1997:233). However, later, when affines have proven their worth, so to speak, they are, as already noted, frequently assimilated in this way among the Bentian, too.

each other or other groups. However, it still largely persists, even though, according to my investigations, around twenty to thirty percent of the inhabitants of the present-day Bentian villages originated from villages other than where they now reside.

In order to give some indication of the extent people in Bentian villages are related and endogamous, I have included a kinship diagram (Fig. 1) of people resident in Temiang who are mentioned in Udin's story, or in some other examples which are presented in later chapters. The diagram thus also serves to illustrate the links between the *dramatis personae* in these examples (many of whom figure in several examples). The diagram is notably not a diagram of all people in Temiang, even though it includes two-thirds of the population who resided within the village's territory in April-June 1996.[77] In addition, it includes the parents (all dead) of most indigenous Temiangers in the oldest generation alive at that time. These parents were all members of three sibling sets (who were also internally related), a fact which demonstrates that most Temiangers can trace a common ancestry from a very limited number of ancestors just a few generations back in time. Most people in the oldest living generation notably also belonged to two sibling sets, and all other original Temiangers in this generation, including those not depicted, are also cognatically related, mostly within second cousin range. In terms of the degree of interrelatedness that this entails, Temiang is probably fairly typical of smaller Bentian villages (in large villages people are not quite as closely related even though people within certain village clusters may well be so). The village notably represents an amalgamation of seven housegroups most of which maintained separate *lou* within its territory until some forty years ago (however, most present-day Temiangers descend from just two of these houses, i.e. from those in which the three sibling sets of the oldest generation were born). Temiang was established as a village at the end of the nineteenth century when a few of its *manti* were given titles by the sultan of Kutai and a *lou solai* bearing its name was built. Until the early period of Indonesian independence, its members rarely married out and marriage within the house seems in fact to have been preferred. The community was formerly somewhat larger than now, a

[77] The diagram excludes people who have moved to other villages, as well as some people that I have not been able to illustrate because of considerations of space. I have not, for example, included all the siblings or children of the people mentioned. People who died young and were childless have also been excluded. The youngest living generation, which consisted of some fifteen children below the age of ten, is also, with the exception of Udin's children, excluded. For technical reasons, I have not been able to illustrate all the marriages of the people in the diagram, although I have indicated a few subsequent marriages for a few people who play prominent roles in the examples. Two people, Ma Sarakang and Nen Bujok, I have even indicated twice, in different parts of this diagram, precisely in order to indicate their marriages, which are relevant in different examples. Generally, I have not indicated the internal relationship of inmarried Temiangers, and only a few adoptive relationships have been indicated. The basic principle for inclusion in the diagram has been that only those who are mentioned in the text, and their wives, children and parents should be indicated (and the latter are not identified by name unless they are also mentioned). One more thing to observe is that the diagram generally does not indicate internal relationships between non-original Temiangers.

Fig. 1. Kinship Relations of Temiang Residents Mentioned in the Text



majority of the members of most of its constituent housegroups having been lost to Datai Munte over the years. Today, there is a shortage of marriage partners in Temiang which probably largely explains the fact that many people in the younger generations have married Bermaungers (or people from Datai Munte). Today, unlike in the past, many people, especially men, have also traveled widely, and there are quite often visitors from afar passing by.

Despite increasing regional interaction and intervillage marriage, kinship relations, including cognatic ones, nevertheless continue to be prominent in most Temiangers' as in other Bentians' lives. In fact, even inmarried individuals usually have at least some cognatic relations in the villages where they reside. This is the result of the fact that these individuals tend to have originated from the same villages, and be related prior to arriving at their new villages. If one looks at from where the non-original residents of the different Bentian villages come, one generally finds that the majority come from a rather limited number of other Bentian or Luangan villages. Most of them would say that they have "followed their kin" (*nyang kaben*), that is, the fact that one or several of their relatives have dwelled in another village has formed an incentive for them to go to that village.

Udin would not have gone to Temiang, a small, insignificant and rather isolated village with a reputation for poisoning, had he not had some prior relations with relatives there, which resulted in his getting the opportunity of making some money harvesting rattan. The same is also true of his mother's second cousin Nen Simur (with whom Rosa was living when Udin first came to Temiang) who married into Temiang as a result of meeting her husband while visiting her sister Nen Bai (with whom Udin also stayed during his first stay in Temiang). One could, in fact, regard all those ten people in Temiang who originated from Bermaung — each of whom was related to everyone else within a third cousin range — as together constituting one long chain where every link is connected to some other one(s) at both sides, and where Ma Pile, the old man who assisted Udin at the lawsuit negotiations, is at the starting end of the chain. Everyone making up this imaginary chain was not, of course, necessarily dependent on the presence of the immediately preceding link, in the sense that it was always that relative who caused him or her to move. But most of them would not have been part of it at all without the presence of at least some of the preceding links.

There are many more examples in Bentian society of kinship chains such as that of the Bermaungers who had moved to Temiang. This chain itself is complexly intertwined with two or three other ones, first, with one of some ten to twenty Bermaungers who had moved to Datai Munte, the neighboring village, and second, with one of some ten Temiangers who had moved to Bermaung, and another consisting of at least as many people who had moved from Datai Munte to Bermaung. Another example, which it is appropriate to mention here, was made up of a number of Benuaq Dayak men, including Udin's friend Mudai (the young man whose swidden was adjacent to Udin's), Ma

Sarakang's dead father Ma Ruran, and Karim (see Fig. 1), who also one after another moved to Temiang or its "mother" village Datai Munte, and who were also all internally related and had originated from a few neighboring villages. The reasons why each of these men and other people who were part of other similar kin chains initially came to follow their kin are varied and not always clear. In some cases, they might have been asked to come by their relatives (who might have needed some kind of help, or just longed for company), whereas in other cases they have gone on their own initiative, looking for a wife, perhaps, or as in Udin's case, looking for work to earn some cash (but ending up with a wife). In some cases, they went because their elders had perceived an opportunity to marry them to someone because of *their* previously established relations with the affinal kin of that person. As this indicates, village exogamy does not always entail kin group exogamy. When people marry out, they often marry relatives (with whom they may be related either because of the relations established by their predecessors in the new villages or because of the relations established by people originating from these villages who have married into their villages). In so far as the members of particular villages will continue marrying into a limited number of villages — as they often have done for quite some time — this will of course mean that they will have, in the generations to come, an even greater reserve of relatives to marry in these villages.

There are many reasons why particular Bentians may follow their kin, but what is most important here is the fact that kinship often enables them to go to places where they would not go if they did not have prior kin relations there. Quite frequently it does so because it gives them courage and confidence to stay in unknown or unfamiliar places among more or less unknown people. Despite increased intra- and interregional contact, Bentians are, as already pointed out, generally quite suspicious and wary of strangers, whom they often, in a rather general and unspecific way, feel might want to harm them or at least cannot be counted on for various sorts of support — and this is probably a major reason why endogamy is still preferred (at the same time as the persistence of endogamy also contributes to these suspicions). But, as indicated by the few examples of motives given above, kinship also enables intervillage movement for other, more prosaic reasons. Lack of kin ties perhaps not so much inhibits people from going to places where they would otherwise want to go, as it produces a lack of motivation for them to go, both in the sense of a lack of a particular reason to do so (e.g. a source of cash income), and in the sense of a lack of a more general desire to go: people, as I was often told, want to be with their kin.

Kinship itself is, in fact, an important motive for people to travel. Individuals as well as families not infrequently travel to other villages with the explicit and sole intent of visiting their relatives. Visiting, both close range (*koteu*) and long range (*ngonga*), is an important institution in Bentian society, and people sometimes visit their relatives "just

to hear the news," or in order to keep up their relations with them (although there usually is also some more concrete, often unexpressed purpose with such visits).[78] Not only does visiting make relatives important to each other (and some relatives more important than others), but it works the other way around as well. Bentians are generally quite concerned about the quality and quantity of their kin relations, and not breaking these ties is imperative for most of them regarding at least most of their kin relations.

Inclusive Ideals: Bentian Notions of Kin Obligations

This ideal about maintaining good kin relations not only concerns cognatic kin, but extends to affinal relations. People quickly become entangled in affinal relations after marrying, as Udin did when he moved to Temiang after marrying Rosa. One is, in fact, subjected to greater surveillance with respect to conforming to this ideal in the case of affinal relations than one is in the case of cognatic relations. Behavior toward affines (even if one knows them before marrying) is also expected to be somewhat more formal than behavior toward cognates, and politeness and commitment is expected, particularly from the newly-married toward their parents-in-law and other elders-in-law. Staying with affines, one's obligations or interactions are normally not restricted to one's parents-in-law. In Udin's case, this was especially clear as he and Rosa did not stay with Rosa's parents while uxorilocally resident in Temiang (but, instead, with Rosa's grandmother Tak Rosa while on their swidden, and with the latter's brother Ma Bari while in the village). This had to do with the fact that Rosa's parents for several years had spent much of their time in her father's village (Rosa did not want to follow them there), and that Rosa therefore had been staying with other of her relatives (not an unusual arrangement). Nevertheless, it is normally more common than not that one is much involved also with other affinal kin than the spouse's parents. The household, whether it consists of a two-generation family or a three-generation family, which is more common, cannot act autonomously, but has to take into consideration the interests of both the larger community and, more particularly, those of closer kin.[79]

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[78] I will not here describe the institution of visiting, which conforms rather closely to that described by Rosaldo (1993) for the Ilongots, but it should be kept in mind that people very frequently drop by each other's farmhouses and village houses. In village multi-family houses (*lou*), there is almost daily someone dropping in, and for much of the time someone staying for an extended period.

[79] I here join Christine Helliwell (1995, 1996) in a critique of a tendency in the Borneo ethnography of treating the household as strongly autonomous, epitomized by Freeman's (1958:22) notion of the (Iban) household as a "sovereign country." Sather (1993) has also challenged this notion of Freeman's by way of an analysis of the Iban longhouse as a "ritually constituted structure," which integrates its constituent units, the longhouse compartments, in a hierarchic order of precedence.

Bentian kinship is ideally strongly inclusive. Important indications of this are the practices of naming and treating classificatory siblings as true siblings, and the tendency of equating the children of close same-sex siblings with one's own children (see Appendix 1 on kinship terminology). Another significant manifestation of this inclusiveness is the notion that "one's spouse's kin becomes one's own" (*kaben sao/bane jadi kaben nyawa*).[80] For address, one is expected to use the same terminological designations as the spouse for her or his kin, except for the spouse's siblings (and classificatory siblings) who are referred to by special terms (*ayu, ongan*). Officially, no moral distinction is made between cognatic and affinal kin. Both should be treated with respect if they are in an older generation than ego, or as equals if they are on the same generational level as oneself. Most important, both cognatic and affinal kin should be treated well. Also in respect to people's behavior in practice, no moral distinction is usually made between the two categories. If one looks at ego-centered kin groups, for example, such as ritual congregations or ricefield workgroups, these almost always include affinal kin. Similarly, important dyadic relations are also frequently maintained with affinal kin. There thus seems to be little justification for the use of an exclusively cognatic kindred concept as advocated by Freeman (1961). In so far as cognatic kin are favored over affinal kin at all, this seems to have more to do with "practical association" and "familiarity," the result of having lived together and learned to know each other, than with any idea about common substance or the like.

Turning affinal relatives into kin does often not happen overnight, however, but is rather something appropriately described as a process, which sometimes takes considerable time. Many marriages (including Udin's first) end in divorce, especially during the first few years. People unaccustomed to each other are often painfully shy and uncomfortable in each other's company. Young couples are strongly subordinated to the parents of the spouse with whom they live (Udin was something of an exception in this respect), who not infrequently take more responsibility over their grandchildren than the parents themselves (when the grandchildren get ill, for instance). Inmarried individuals, in so far as they do not know their affines from before, often feel highly vulnerable in their new milieu, and are themselves often regarded with suspicion.

The authority of the older generations over younger kin is also manifested in that parents (or other older kin) usually select or suggest spouses for their children, although marriages initiated by the spouses themselves are increasingly frequent (especially in the case of village exogamy). Udin's marriage to Rosa can perhaps be seen as belonging to the latter category. He fell in love with Rosa during his first stay in Temiang, and when

[80] The notion is expressed by the kinship term *ayu meyari* which literally means "sibling-in-law behaving like a sibling." This term is frequently used for collateral affines with whom the speaker wants to indicate a close personal relationship.

she visited Bermaung with her relatives two years later they started to see each other until it became clear to their relatives that they "formed a couple," and that consequently, as it was expressed by the people involved, there was nothing to do except for the two to get married (illicit relations are considered dishonorable and unlawful in respect to both *adat* and national law). However, as in most intervillage marriages in the region, there was a kin link in the older generation, that is, between Udin's mother and Rosa's adoptive mother Nen Simur, which thus made Rosa, if adoptive connections are counted, Udin's first cousin. These connecting relatives were also the ones who decided that Udin and Rosa should get married, even if it was the latter who chose each other.

When people marry among the Bentian and thus (in some cases) acquire new kin, this is not a purely formal matter. Kinship is not only a theoretical conception of relatedness, theoretically linking practically discrete and independent households to each other, or a set of abstract principles applied freely or ignored at will. On the contrary, kinship is a primarily practical concern regularly compelling, constraining or enabling (with kin assistance) people to *do* various things or not to do others. Kinship, in the form of particular cognatic or affinal kin relations, is an experientially central preoccupation in Bentian everyday life, which frequently presses itself upon people, even when they try to resist it (e.g. when elders come to get young people who stay away from their kin on isolated swiddens). The authority of kinship obligations is thus largely an effect of the salience of kinship relations in practice; the practical difficulty of avoiding one's relations contributes significantly to the force of such obligations.

In a strictly legal sense, on the other hand, kinship is not very important. As elsewhere in Borneo, there are no explicit or implicit juridically effective rules defining rights or obligations toward particular categories of kin or even toward kin in general (cf. King:1991:18). There is never a guarantee that one will receive support from any particular relative in any particular case, and one is not very likely to obtain much compensation if one sues someone for neglecting his or her obligations (although one can, in principle, always try). The most that is reasonable for one to do in most cases is simply to answer back, so to speak, by abstaining from performing one's own obligations toward the person who has done so toward oneself.

Nevertheless, even though there are no jural guarantees for obtaining support from relatives, and no specific regulations pertaining to particular relations, there are some highly authoritative general norms stating that you should help and share food and material resources with your relatives and not break your ties with them. Thus, recognizing a kinship tie with someone involves a recognition of some obligations toward that person. Despite the general character of these norms, and the lack of effective measures of enforcing them, they still influence people significantly. The ideals of helping and sharing with one's kin and of maintaining one's kin relations are repeatedly expressed both in informal everyday discussions and in such semi-formal contexts as

customary law negotiations, speeches given at rituals and weddings, and the elders' regular evening monologues (during which, among other things, various family concerns are brought up, and work tasks of the next day scheduled). Living in Bentian society, one is constantly reminded of these ideals, and people take them seriously. Most Bentians regularly go to considerable effort to help their relatives (like Udin did, working on other people's swiddens for extended periods), and frequently also make substantial material contributions to them (as, for example, Kakah Ramat did, when he contributed a water buffalo to be sacrificed at the *buntang* ritual arranged for Tak Lodot, his wife's brother's wife). Consciously failing to conform to the norms would make most of them more or less uncomfortable, not the least because of fear of supernatural retribution, lest they had some good excuse to do so, like illness, or unfulfilled obligations on the relatives' part. At the least, no one would readily admit to transgression or be indifferent toward accusations of it. In this respect, kinship clearly represents an influential authority in Bentian society which frequently shapes the way people interact with other people, sometimes as a result of other-authorization, sometimes because of self-authorization.

At the same time, it is undeniably true, in the Bentian case as in Borneo in general, that we are in a "nebulous realm of expectations and moral obligation, in which there is *considerable choice* in co-operating with kinsmen and others, and in affiliation to social groupings" (King 1991:18, orig. italics). As a result of the system of bilateral kinship reckoning, people cannot even keep up the links to all their cognatic relatives even if they wanted to — and given the possibility of extending kinship terminology to non-affines and non-cognates, there is a potentially almost infinite number of relatives. As there are no regulations specifying whom you should support or turn to and when, this indeed leaves some room for individual decision about in which relationships to invest. This does not imply, however, that kinship has little influence over people's lives. With respect to norms, the lack of precision and sanctions does not have to mean the lack of authority.

The ideals of helping kin and maintaining kin ties are very real concerns for most Bentians, and they have a tremendous impact on their social life. They do so because they are internalized. People want to appear to themselves and to others as conforming to the ideals, that is, to appear as "good people." As it is hard to do so by only investing in those relations that one for some reason would like to invest in, freedom of choice in kin cooperation is, in fact, largely illusory or theoretical. In practical life one has to take into consideration recurrent requests for help or material contributions from a wide range of relatives, and one cannot dismiss them all and still maintain good kin relations (at least one cannot then expect others to respond to one's own requests). Just like visiting, "asking someone for something" (*sake*) or "ordering someone to do something" (*siu*) are central social institutions in Bentian society, and frequently the purpose of visiting. People make requests of each other almost on a daily basis. Even though one can avoid responding to many requests by simply letting time pass and doing nothing (especially

if the request is unreasonable, which it is not very rare for requests to be), it is never easy to resist a request, as requests usually are presented face-to-face in a rather formalized and very explicit way. At least one cannot do so straight away — such behavior would be considered very impolite — and not without reference to some sort of "obstacle" (*aur*) or other legitimate excuse.

The prominence of kin relations, and kin requests, together with the ideals of kin obligations discussed above thus makes it very difficult to interact with kin solely according to one's own preferences. This is not, however, to suggest that people have no choice at all or that they help their kin only because of a sense of obligation. Udin, for instance, did not carry out various services toward his affinal kin in Temiang just because he felt he had to. He took a certain pride in being an exceptionally good hunter, and usually did not seem reluctant at all when distributing game that he had caught (even though he tried to get away with selling some at times, especially toward the end of his stay). Likewise, he did not complain when he, at different periods, helped Ma Lombang, Ma Dengu, Ma Bari and Ma Pile (the four *manti* who provided the plates that he was ordered to pay at the lawsuit case) by hard work on their swiddens, or when providing most of the rice eaten at the *buntang* ritual held for Ma Lombang's wife Tak Lodot, or by feeding Rosa's grandmother Tak Rosa for several years. These were all tasks that he, like most other locals, largely took for granted, and often even performed with a certain degree of enjoyment, or at least contentment. This was also the case when he told hunting stories to Ma Bari, although I could not at first help getting the feeling that he was being ingratiating. Later I realized that his overt enthusiasm was real, and that he also liked Ma Bari and apparently found some pleasure in having this otherwise serious man relax while listening to him. More generally, Udin probably found it rewarding to perform a whole range of different obligations toward his affines (and cognatic kin) because in accomplishing them, and often doing so in a commendable way, he validated his increasingly adult status, and his moral standing, in his own eyes as well as in others'. In comparison with other young men in the village, Udin appeared quite successful, experienced and even autonomous, largely *as a result of* fulfilling his kin obligations.

This points to the fact that becoming a mature social person in Bentian society has much to do with learning how to adopt proper kin role behavior, as well as acquiring the requisite material resources needed to do so. For this reason it is, among the Bentian, as among the Ilongots (cf. M. Rosaldo 1980: 68, 182), especially adults who "know of kinship," and I was told that children or young people (*tia*) need the guidance of their seniors for the reason that they "do not know how to act as brothers-in-law, do not know how to act as sisters-in-law" (*beau tau mayu, beau tau mongan*), an expression which was commonly used to metonymically designate failure to live up to expected kinship

behavior.[81] In these societies, kinship apparently represents, as McKinley has argued more generally, a "philosophy ... about what completes a person socially, psychologically, and morally, and how that completeness comes about through a responsible sense of attachment and obligation to others" (2001:143). As this indicates, the appeal and force of kinship as an authority derive in part from the fact that being a relative (by acting as one) represents an integral aspect of personal and social identity. Acting as a good relative may be rewarding in that it can be consonant with one's vision of whom wants to be. In Udin's case, in particular, this factor seems to have been an important one, and one which generally had favorable effects on his standing and relationships in Temiang.

Udin's adaptation to his new kin in Temiang did in fact seem to be a comparatively successful case at first; he relatively quickly established close and harmonious relations with a number of affinal relatives in the village. This process was somewhat hastened by his prior (cognatic) kin relations in Temiang, but the most important factor was without doubt his success in fulfilling his kin obligations. Everything did seem to go really well for him until he suddenly, after having stayed three years in the village, was sued for sorcery by Nen Pare's family. This event, which came as a shock to him and others, immediately made him very discontented about staying in Temiang, even though until then, he mainly had enjoyed himself and his social role in the local community.

Food and Reciprocity: The Material Basis of Bentian Kin Relations

Why then, did Udin become suspected of sorcery in the first place? Why was he found guilty? In order to explore these questions and gain some understanding of what subsequently happened, it is necessary to investigate a few issues which are of critical importance for Bentian kinship. These issues profoundly inform notions of relatedness, at the same time as they help create division, and give shape to notions of otherness.

The focus on Udin has suggested some reasons why Bentians and other Luangans are concerned with maintaining good relations with their relatives. There are some other factors as well, some of which might be important generally, if perhaps not in Udin's case. One of the most obvious of these is that people (in varying degrees) rely on their relatives for their basic needs. Unlike Udin, many people are far from autonomous or self-sufficient in terms of subsistence. In fact, some people need kin support even to

[81] The translation of this statement is inexact. The word *ayu* (of which *mayu* is a verbal form) is used by male speakers for all their brothers- and sisters-in-law (including their siblings' spouses and spouse's siblings), and by female speakers for their brothers-in-law, while *ongan* (which is the root form of *mongan*) is only used by female speakers for their sisters-in-law (see Appendix 1). The fact that kinship terms in this example are used as verbs is interesting and can perhaps be taken as an indication of the relatively great importance among the Bentian of kinship as an ideology, as opposed to a system of referential designation.

survive. Food is a most vital concern, and often a very sensitive matter in the Bentian area. It is only occasionally that anyone has plenty, and during years with bad harvests some individuals and families might become critically dependent on others (in the past, this sometimes led to some people becoming debt slaves, *batak ripen*). Private skewers of barbecued/smoked meat (*seluyan*), which a large part of all individual meat shares become, are objects of considerable concern in everyday life.[82] Hunger, or its anticipation, influences many people's affairs with their kin. Less dramatically, people need kin for other elementary purposes than food, as well. Kin relations provide such essential resources as manpower for various work tasks such as house building or rice planting, participants at curing rituals (important for the patient, as well as for the shaman), followers for the *manti*, supporters at customary law arbitrations, land for cultivation (granted by previous cultivators or their relatives), and not the least, company (on visits to other villages, hunting trips, or during lonely days in isolated farmhouses).

For anyone trying to make a living in Bentian society, it is clear that good relations with relatives and extensive kin networks are good to have. People need kin relations just as much as, if not more than, they are constrained by them. They need kin relations for the various social resources that such relations can be expected to provide. Why exactly it is that kin relations can be expected to provide such resources in the first place is a question for which there is no simple answer — perhaps one comes as close as one can get in suggesting that it is because experience has shown it to be so. Let me here suggest that it probably has much to do with the observation that the concerns relevant for providing or expending such kin resources are rooted in practicality. However, this should not be interpreted to mean that Bentians, for most of the time, consciously and calculatingly act on the basis of some more or less simple sort of self-interest. On the contrary, the values of kin-tie maintenance and sharing are sincerely affirmed, and a certain degree of altruism is typically practiced in kin relations. But kinship relations are, nevertheless, much informed by reciprocity, even though often by a reciprocity of a rather generalized kind, although sometimes also in terms of a more balanced reciprocity, as in the case of labor exchange, *beru,* carried out in connection with collective swidden work. Reciprocity, like kin tie maintenance, is a Bentian ideal which puts certain limitations on the authority of kinship, but which also gives kinship part of its meaning.

Bentians think of kinship relations as relations of mutual obligation. Not only should kin help each other, but those who help each other are seen as kin. To simplify just a little: those continuously interacting according to principles of general reciprocity either are, or become, kin. As is famous for Bornean and other Southeast Asian societies, if one

[82] These meat skewers are, although no one would say that much, treated as if they were owned by individuals rather than by families. They are stored in bamboo trays (*ansak*) hanging from the rafters of the house (away from dogs), and are an important source of envy for those who are not fortunate enough to receive such skewers from successful hunters so often.

stays long enough — and becomes involved in complementary exchange relations — one usually becomes adopted. Similarly, inmarried collaterals in time usually become regarded as *peyari*, "siblings," by their affinal peers, whereas sons- or daughters-in-law (*benantu*), frequently become referred to as children, *anak*, if, as an informant put it to me, "they become close enough."

Kinship among the Bentian does not work automatically and it is not something given. The fact that one is related to someone is not alone enough to make that person important to oneself. It is those relatives with whom one has much to do (or rather, that have much to do with oneself) that become important. Those who move away tend to become distant not only physically, but also emotionally — if not occasionally visited. Those who never give anything in return tend to become avoided — if possible. Those who are one's neighbors are difficult to ignore and tend to become important, whether one likes them or not. Interaction, together with reciprocity and proximity, thus emerge as crucial factors shaping "true" relatedness. Kinship that matters is largely constructed or achieved: it has to be enacted to become important.

Considerations of reciprocity are centrally significant in Bentian social life, and reciprocity largely concerns material resources. In everyday practical life, food is a crucial mediator of social relationships (e.g. Schieffelin 1976), and it should not be surprising that fear of strangers is mainly expressed as fear of being poisoned, or that commensality and the sharing of food are critical indicators of boundaries of commonality within local communities. Considerations of reciprocity also concern services, and participation in religious rituals (which are very frequently arranged in Kaharingan communities, such as Temiang) or in ricefield workgroups are examples of prestations provided according to a logic approaching balanced reciprocity. Failed reciprocity and envy are recognized as major sources of dissension (they are, for instance, standard topics of wedding speeches), and the pervasive system of presenting and distributing plates on a number of different social occasions should be understood against this background.[83] This allocation of plates, which in local conceptions epitomizes the practice of *adat* (customary law) is

[83] The plates, which are usually white or almost white, and typically referred to as "white plates" (*lumah bura*), are most importantly distributed as "rewards" (*upah*) for various forms of ritual (and sometimes other) work or paid as fines in lawsuits, but also presented as items of exchange at weddings and in other transactions within the *adat* sphere. In the past, other objects such as gongs, spears, and ceramic jars were also frequently used (especially when larger sums were paid) but today cheap, factory-made plates increasingly substitute for these. As a consequence you often see tall piles of plates tied together with rattan lining the walls in some houses, particularly in those inhabited by a *manti*, *belian* (shaman) or *warah* (death shaman). The value of plates is largely symbolic, although their purchase value which in 1996 amounted to about 10.000 rupiah for a dozen (about 4.5 USD at the time) is not locally negligible (for instance, Udin could not have afforded the 10 dozen plates which he was ordered to pay to Nen Pare). A particular example of plate exchange, mentioned in the story, is when parents bring a married child home after concluded postmarital service by presenting a single white plate to the child's parents-in-law. Single plates are also presented at other occasions as expressions of, among other things, gratitude or a clean heart.

a custom aimed at symbolically (and materially) regulating socially disruptive sentiments, and thus providing favorable conditions for coexistence and cooperation. At the same time, however, by addressing and publicly enacting such concerns, and by spotlighting the payment of rewards and compensation, the system also stimulates considerations of reciprocity — by promoting consciousness and calculation of services and endowments provided — and thereby helps to regenerate socially disruptive sentiments (e.g. envy, anger).

Even though people in Temiang frequently voiced the idea that they were *erai aben* or "one family," there were several lines of division discernable in the small, but only very occasionally gathered, community. There were clear tendencies with regards to who interacted with whom, and which families and individuals that helped or asked for help from which others. So even though Udin generally appeared quite successfully integrated in Temiang, this does not mean that he (or anyone else) was integrated with all the people in the village. Udin did not bring meat to all of his affinal relatives, and he did not help all of them with work on their rice fields. He maintained rather close and corporate dyadic relations with quite a few people in Temiang, and with many others he regularly associated at rituals. But there were also some people who rarely attended the same rituals as he did, with whom he had almost no interaction. He had particularly few contacts with the people of the two houses located furthest downstream in the village, the one of which was inhabited by Nen Pare's family (and the other by Kakah Unsir and some of his children and grandchildren: see Fig. 1). To these people, with whom he neither had any cognatic or close affinal relations, he largely remained a "stranger" or "other person" (*ulun*),[84] and to them his success as a hunter and in befriending other villagers was not so much a reason for gratification as an occasional source of annoyance or envy.

Exactly why Udin came to be accused of having caused Nen Pare's illness was, however, a secret possibly known only by Nen Pare herself and her sister Nen Bujok. It was not revealed, although it appears that something that the doctor who diagnosed the tumor said (or a misunderstanding of what he said), was of decisive importance for the development of the hypothesis, in that it made Nen Pare's family believe that the illness was manmade. For an outsider, the dead-end situation in which they found themselves when Nen Pare refused the operation after the doctor had pronounced that her illness would be fatal unless she underwent surgery, can also appear as a factor which in itself was capable of stimulating the growth of such suspicions in that it made Nen Pare and her family desperately embittered.

If, however, there was any specific individual in Temiang who was particularly likely of being accused of sorcery by Nen Pare, it was probably Udin. In the first place, most

[84] The word *ulun* interestingly has several different referents. In the first place, it means "person" in a general and neutral sense. But it is also used more specifically to denote strangers or non-kin and, finally, as in other Bornean languages, it is used in the particular sense of "slave."

other villagers were Nen Pare's relatives or people well-known by her, and so much less likely of becoming the object of any such suspicions on her part. Udin, on the other hand, was an unrelated person from another village whom she hardly knew, and who had done quite a lot of traveling, which is an opportunity for acquiring such "knowledge" (*lemu* or *ilmu*) as is a prerequisite for conducting sorcery. On top of this, Udin might have provoked Nen Pare by his sometimes conspicuous behavior, and he certainly did so when he walked around eating meat at his family's ritual without offering any to the people present. Regardless, whether Udin was correct in believing that it was this incident that made Nen Pare suspect him of sorcery — and he might very well have been at least partly right, as it most certainly contributed to her disapproving attitude toward him — his own assumption that it was so testifies to the fact that there was something wrong with his conduct that might have motivated such an interpretation by her. His behavior was, in fact, highly inappropriate in that it violated some very basic notions of Bentian social etiquette, as well as exposed Nen Pare to danger. Not inviting others to join in while one is eating or, conversely, not accepting such an invitation and failing to symbolically partake of the food by picking up a few grains of rice (*sintep*), are forms of misconduct referred to by the term *tapen*, which according to Bentian beliefs makes both offender and offended vulnerable to spirit attacks.[85]

Community Integration and Formalization

Coexistence and cooperation are not always easy in small communities with dense and tangled kin relations entailing sometimes burdensome obligations and difficult balancing with limited resources. Udin might not always have been the most tactful and gracious of all persons in his interaction with other people in Temiang, but becoming accused of sorcery was still something which he had not expected, all the more so as he had little esoteric interest or knowledge of any sort. Much worse for him, however, than the accusation itself, based on the claim that he had been jealous of Nen Pare (which he dismissed as ridiculous), was the verdict of the lawsuit case, and the fact that the *manti*

[85] Beliefs resembling those described here are quite widespread, at least in Borneo. In addition to among Luangans I also encountered them among Malays and Ngaju Dayaks (cf. Schiller 1997:80), and Bernstein (1997:67-70) reports similar notions among the Taman of West Kalimantan, while Tsing (1993:189) does so for the Meratus. Bernstein suggests a somewhat different interpretation of the rationale for the beliefs surrounding the Taman term *kempunan*, which resembles but covers a wider range of misconduct than the Luangan word *tapen* used here. He sees failure to carry out an action in accordance with a preconceived wish as the basic factor leading to vulnerability of spirit attack. In contrast, I here propose an essentially social explanation. I consider failure to partake of interpersonal exchange (that is, failure to carry out the Maussian obligations of giving, receiving and reciprocating) to be the underlying cause making such behavior objectionable and dangerous. A similar interpretation is made by Tsing who gives "isolating oneself from others or from one's environment" as what leads to the equivalent condition among the Meratus (1993:189).

who defended him did not put up a very hard defense. It was of some, but not much, consolation to him that these *manti* provided him with the plates that he was ordered to pay (it implied acknowledgment of the help that he had given them). He was insulted and disappointed that the community of which he had become a part had allowed such an outcome, and he began to feel that he was not really among his own, and to miss his family in Bermaung. He also started to fear staying in Temiang, or at least expressed this as a reason to return home. Another reason to do so, to which he until then had given little attention, was the fact that the three years of initial uxorilocal residence prescribed at his wedding had now elapsed.

Even though most people considered Udin innocent of the charges, however, no one except Udin himself seemed much upset about the outcome of the case. It seems reasonable to assume that people's theory that the unexpressed motivation for the verdict had been to ensure harmony in the village, or at least counteract division and conflict, was correct. People feared Nen Pare and her sister Nen Bujok, who were hot-tempered women, and believed that a decision clearing Udin of charges could have induced them to hurt others, taking into consideration that they already were in great despair because of Nen Pare's illness. This fear was probably also the main reason why no one present at the lawsuit drank the tea that Nen Bujok served, although a concern for demonstrating neutrality could also have played a part. In addition, relations between the two downstream houses and the rest of the houses of Temiang were already strained, so such a decision could have threatened the already fragile unity of the community.

On the other hand, no one except Nen Pare's family was probably fully comfortable with the decision, as people did not consider it fair that Udin was judged guilty, even though they accepted the verdict for the sake of its consequences. Ma Lombang's awkwardness at the lawsuit, for instance, was deeply felt. He was torn by his simultaneous obligations toward Udin, on the one hand, who had helped him much during his first two years in Temiang (and to whom he gave one dozen plates as part of those that Udin was sentenced to pay), and, on the other hand, toward his "children" Nen Pare and Nen Bujok, whom he had adopted when their father (his brother) had died, and for whom he was assigned to speak. For some other people, if perhaps not for Ma Lombang, as he was a quite experienced and bold *manti*, the formality of the occasion probably also contributed to a more general sense of discomfort.

It is clear, in my view, that the verdict can be seen as an expression of some widely shared Bentian notions assigning priority to the community (and other collectivities) over the individual. Justice for Udin was subordinated to the well-being of the community, as it was once again and even more clearly a couple of weeks later when negotiations were held in Ma Bari's longhouse in Temiang, following Udin's announcement that he planned to return home. This time Udin had no one speaking for him or really supporting him, so he lost his case, even though he had "tradition" (*adat*) on his side, so to speak, in that it

had been determined at his wedding that he was to return home after three years. The fact that he, in his own words, "was all alone, and they were many people" was of crucial importance for the outcome of these negotiations, and his acknowledgment of this indicates that his cognatic kin in Temiang (some of whom were present at the negotiations) no longer considered themselves as fellow Bermaungers as much as Temiangers, primarily engaged in their present life situations and affinal relationships. It also shows, of course, the importance of kin support on such occasions. Because he had no relatives representing him at the negotiations, it was possible for Udin's affinal kin in Temiang to virtually unchallenged invoke *their* kin ties with him as examples of morally sanctioned kin obligations which he was to fulfill. Without the presence of his closest cognatic relatives from Bermaung, his suggestion that his kin obligations toward them provided a reason for him to return home could not be confirmed, which put him in a situation in which he could only speak for himself as an *individual*, and hence lacked legitimate grounds to counter the claims of his kin obligations by his affinal relatives who represented a *collectivity*.

In addition to being able to control the definition of his kin obligations, Ma Bari and the other *manti* speaking could also invoke the rather incontestable fact that Udin was badly needed in Temiang because of his material contributions to the community, an argument weighing heavily in local thinking, which Udin could not have opposed in itself, even if he had tried.[86] He did, however, not do so, and in fact, he hardly defended himself at all, contrary to what one could be led to believe by his statement in the letter that he "resisted their argument." With the exception of the *manti*, who gave their long speeches while the others were silent, no one said very much, and would probably have not dared to, or at least been uncomfortable doing so, as it is usually mostly the *manti* who speak during such "negotiations," which essentially are conceived of as occasions when the elders speak and present solutions in the interest of the community, with the authority of the ancestors and tradition.

The *manti* obtain a significant portion of their power from the fact that they are, or at least are supposed to be, speaking in the interest of the community, for the common good. The development of local leadership has historically gone hand-in-hand with an increasing regional and local integration capitalized on by the *manti* as well as largely effected by the *manti*. Integration is in itself seen as an ideal both in local views and according to government politics, which for over a century have been concerned with altering the dispersed settlement pattern of the Bentian and other Luangans. Significantly,

[86] Material considerations were also invoked by Udin's mother when describing her own life situation in Bermaung in response to Ma Bari's monologic account of Udin's situation in Temiang. The significance of such considerations — as well as of principles of sharing and reciprocity — were made evident again, when she and Ma Bari some time later had an argument regarding a catch of catfish which Udin sold without distributing shares to his relatives.

the *manti* commonly use "external" authority to achieve their ends. An example of this was when Ma Bari, using the Indonesian word *urusan*, explained to Udin's mother that it was Udin's "assignment" to hunt wild boar and deer, thereby conjuring principles of responsibility associated with the Indonesian state administration. Apart from expectations that they represent the community, and from their use of the language of the state, the *manti* also receive an important part of their authority from their regularly trained skills in speaking the "language of the ancestors" (*basa tuha one*) or what is also sometimes called "roundabout language" (*basa mengkelotes*). It was partly by attempting to employ such a language (which is rich in parallelisms, proverbs and metaphors) that Udin in his letter tried to authorize his requests to his Bermaung kin to come and visit him. Another source of *manti* power, finally, which can hardly be overestimated, is the kin relations of the *manti* within and outside of their communities. Kin relations determine the scope of effective influence of a *manti*, and wide networks of kin are a prerequisite for any greater degree of *manti* authority (today, however, it is theoretically possible for a *manti* to exert village-wide authority even if he would lack such a kin network, that is, if he holds office as village head or head of customary law).[87]

Customary law (*adat*) is itself the perhaps most sanctified of all Bentian notions, and submitting a conflict or problem to adjudication or formal negotiation implies imbuing the resolution with the sanctity of that institution. As is clear from his letter, Udin considered the *manti*'s decision as more or less incontestable or even irrevocable ("the way to proceed is already closed, there is no way out anymore"), and afterwards he made no attempt at contesting the decision, except perhaps by writing his letter.[88] As the negotiations in Ma Bari's longhouse indicate, it can be difficult to resist the authority of the elders during such formal negotiations. As Maurice Bloch (1974, 1975) has argued, with reference to Malagasy oratory, authority on such occasions largely derives from formalization which effectively reduces what can be said and so helps preserve tradition and the preexisting order. Bloch primarily refers to formalized language comparable to what I here have called ancestral language, but I want to continue his line of reasoning and suggest that formalization more generally serves similar purposes among the Bentian, as well as constitutes a key strategy of authorization employed not only by the elders in the name of the community, but also sometimes by other parties and individuals, and for other purposes.

Examples of the use of formalization for authorizing purposes in Udin's story are the speeches of the elders, the distribution of plates after the lawsuit in Datai Munte, and the

[87] The importance of kinship for *manti*ship is, of course, an additional factor demonstrating the importance of kinship in Bentian society. It will be explored more thoroughly in connection with my discussion of *manti*ship in Chapter 5.

[88] It is unclear to me if Udin by writing the letter not only hoped for his relatives to visit him but also considered it possible that they might come to take him home.

presentation of one dozen plates to Udin as a token of appreciation after the negotiations in Temiang. These are prototypical instances of formalization employed to serve the interests of the community (Temiang) and subordinate the individual (Udin) to these interests. Other examples include the formalized closing of the lawsuit in Datai Munte (when rice was scattered and the *seniang besarah* addressed), and the ritual bathing of Udin, Rosa and Udin's mother together with Ma Bari and his wife at the ritual for Udin's child Liman a few months later (a ritual arranged, significantly, on the initiative of Ma Bari). All of these instances of formalization can most fundamentally be seen as aimed at enforcing harmonious relations between the parties involved, as well as eliminating threats of spiritual and human danger seen as ensuing from disharmonious relationships. A somewhat different example, finally, is Udin's letter which in itself constituted a formalized request to his relatives to visit him. The letter can also be regarded to have contained several distinct formalizing strategies such as his use of "ancestral language" and his use of kinship terms (e.g. mother's brother, sister's husband) in addressing his relatives. The invocation of kinship can, in fact, be seen to represent a formalizing strategy in itself, in that reference to kinship terminology or obligations entails, when successful, the framing, in Goffman's (1974) terms, of a situation, relation or action as regulated by a distinct, authoritative code (kinship ideology) which has the effect of reducing the range of appropriate behavior in the context and making action accountable in terms of this code as well as compelling the participants to devote greater attention to the situation than they would to an unframed situation. The force of kinship authority can thus be observed to derive in part from how the invocation of kinship is intrinsically linked up with formalization. Similarly, invocation of *adat* (customary law, or prescribed tradition more generally) derives some of its authority precisely from the formalization that such invocation involves.

Notwithstanding its importance as what might be called an authorizing device, however, formalization should not be seen simply as an attempt at authorization transparently oriented towards a goal, but also as an expression of a general and fundamental Bentian concern with what we could call good form which to an important extent represents a value for its own sake. And the paradigmatic way of doing things properly is acting in accordance with *adat* in an expressly articulate and contained, formalized way. An example of acting according to such good form, to which Udin refers in his letter, is when parents (or some other kin representative) present a white plate upon bringing their children home after concluded postmarital residence with their parents-in-law. This, as the plate itself signifies, is *adat*, the right way of acting in such situations (it is also seen as right that the parents in the capacity of elders take responsibility over such moves). Other ways of enacting such shifts in postmarital residence are wrong or at least less appropriate. Thus, if Udin had returned after the lawsuit in Datai Munte it would have been bad form. He did not really have tradition on his side, as he also

indirectly acknowledged in his letter, when he blamed his relatives for having to stay in Temiang. For tradition to have become valid in this case, they should have brought him home.

There is still another reason why such an abrupt departure by Udin would have been bad form. Apart from it having been unauthorized, it is obvious that he would have left with "bad feelings" (*aseng daat*, lit. "a bad gallbladder") which would have implied that the case was not really resolved or that there was something wrong with its conclusion. Not submitting such an unauthorized and unsettling decision to formal resolution would have been experienced as less than satisfactory, not only because of the disadvantageous consequences that it would have had for some particular individuals in Temiang (and for the reputation of the village as a whole), but also because of some important notions of propriety regarding conflict settlement, with which Ma Bari, in particular, was much concerned. That the resolution of the formal negotiations then held also turned out as favorable for the community of Temiang is another thing, even if that was by no means an accident either.

Unpredictability, Situational Adaptability, and Individual Autonomy

When Udin, in his letter, asked his relatives to come to Temiang and visit him, he was appealing to the sense of obligation that people who recognize themselves as kin have toward each other. More precisely, he was hoping that some particular (specifically mentioned) relatives' sense of obligation toward him would make them overcome whatever practical reasons they might have not to make the trip. Addressing them and some of his other relatives by kinship terms, he was spelling out their relationships with him, thereby both reminding them of the connections and making his request formal and thus more difficult to ignore. Udin did not possess any particular type of authority (such as *manti* status) upon which he could draw, and neglecting his request would not have had any repercussions for his relatives. Indeed, he could have done nothing if no one had showed up. All he could do (which he also strategically did) was appeal to his relatives' sentiments, as well as their own interests (by mentioning opportunities of gathering rattan and *gaharu*, for instance). In the end, it was probably a combination of sentiment and interest that caused his mother to come, several months after he had sent her his letter (she both felt sorry for and needed him).

Udin was never sure that anyone from Bermaung was going to visit him, and it is possible that he would never have written a letter if the anthropologist's typewriter had not provided him with an incentive to do so.[89] Letters and other requests to relatives are

[89] Sending letters to relatives has, however, become something of an institution in the area.

far from always answered. Ma Dengu, for instance, who took his letter to Bermaung, had to return home without his wife's son Mohar's brothers, who could not be persuaded to follow him to Temiang and make next year's swidden there. It is also quite likely that channels of other people traveling between Temiang and Bermaung were much more instrumental than the letter in causing Udin's mother to come to Temiang. What I am trying to argue here is that a fundamental uncertainty often characterizes such interpersonal business between relatives among Bentians and other Luangans, especially if they live in different places. This is something which does not only have to do with such things as the difficulty of traveling, however, although difficulties of traveling can be considerable, as Udin's return to Bermaung shows. There also seems to be something about the orientations and expectations of the people — and the nature of Bentian social organization — which on a deeper level makes for such uncertainty.

People in the region often appear intensely preoccupied with their lives in the present, and with those kin relations in which they are engaged at the moment, frequently, it may seem, at unnecessary expense of other relations not currently activated. People also seem to become deeply attached to places and persons with which they become familiar (despite some degree of initial suspicion, if these are places and persons new to them) like Udin did, when he moved to Temiang. But then, on the other hand, people also sometimes break away from the lives and relations in which they previously have been intensely engaged, and in such cases often do so with very short notice, and in a rather total way.

Ties which are not active often do not seem to concern people very much, and of course, people are sometimes so much engaged with those ties that are active, that they have little time left for others. Indeed, forgetting kinship, as an unintentional or more or less intentional action, plays some part in most Bentians' kinship experiences, as it also seems to do among people in many other Southeast Asian societies (e.g. see Carsten 1995b; Dumont 1992). Caught between the cross-cutting and frequently conflicting demands of their various cognatic and affinal relatives, it is as if people had made a virtue out of necessity, and developed a remarkable capacity for "situational adaptability," for making the best of what they have at hand, while keeping an emotional distance from what is past or absent so that it does not interfere more than necessary.[90] Under such circumstances it is never easy to "intervene" by making appeals to someone with whom one does not presently have active relations, especially if one does not present one's requests face to face (this helps to explain, among other things, the custom of having someone fetch, *nontong*, persons that one wants to invite to rituals). Spatial and temporal distance thus lessen the strength of kinship obligations, even if the institution of visiting

[90] The common occurrence of men getting a new or second wife while away for long periods in other villages may perhaps be better understood against this background.

often serves to counteract this tendency. Kinship obligations clearly exert their greatest power "here and now."

There are many factors which make for unpredictability as to how notions of relatedness will play out in interpersonal relations among the Bentian. As already pointed out, there are no rules specifying particular kin obligations, and no prescribed sanctions applicable if someone fails to perform such obligations. In principle, people can decline whatever requests that are made of them, even if they frequently choose not to. However, people do sometimes reject requests, even in such cases when it would not be particularly difficult to fulfil them. But, when they will choose to do so, or otherwise end up doing so, is very difficult to predict. This is so not least because such decisions usually are not made in public or openly discussed beforehand. Bentians are frequently very secretive about whatever they are planning to do, and they are particularly silent about all matters which in some respect can be regarded as divisive or as implying resistance to reciprocity. Moreover, like people everywhere, Bentians do not always plan things, and accident or chance frequently determines what will happen. This has partly to do with the pervasive tendency (well-known for other Borneo peoples as well, see e.g. Hopes 1997b; Sather 1980) of letting dreams and natural signs determine the course of events, or of purposely seeking divination (e.g. in such matters as initiating a journey or choosing a new swidden site).[91] Even more importantly, however, Bentians often deliberately avoid making decisions in order to "wait and see," that is, so as to let the course of events determine what will happen. Rather than actively attempting to solve problems or force events in some particular direction, they are much inclined to let time work out or settle things. In fact, so common does this strategy seem to be, that I find it appropriate here to talk about situational adaptability also in this respect, as a gloss for a readiness to adjust to the demands of the situation, and for a remarkable patience and flexibility in dealing with changing or uncertain circumstances. However, this ability is much more evident on some occasions than on others. One occasion when it was particularly manifest was the last few months of Udin's stay in Temiang.

The arrival of Udin's mother (and sister and brother) in Temiang was something of a turning point in Udin's stay in the village. Udin quickly became much less dissatisfied with staying in Temiang, and seemed to be enjoying himself much as usual again. This

[91] An example from the story of Udin is Ma Dengu's above-mentioned journey to Bermaung which was delayed several days because of an unfavorable omen. Inauspicious dreams and inauspicious natural signs (typically referred to in tandem as *upi daat, baya sala*, lit. "bad dreams, wrong omens") are frequent subjects of Bentian conversations. They also occasionally necessitate ritual healing of the affected person (this is true especially for dreams) who is believed to be vulnerable because of the dream/omen. Bentians are not only hindered by dreams and omens, however, they are also often assisted by them. Bad dreams and omens are most frequently referred to retrospectively, as explanations for misfortune, while auspicious dreams and natural signs, in their turn, often enable people to gain a sense of ancestral and magical power or positive confirmation of what they have set out to do.

also had a lot to do with the approaching birth of his and Rosa's second child, which in its turn was a factor significantly contributing to the prolonged stay of his mother. Udin probably felt more at peace with his mother and siblings around even if he, like everyone else, had no real idea about how long they were going to stay. At the same time, the incessant rain which had continued since their arrival had given him hope that he would be able to at least visit Bermaung after all — in case he would not be able to make a swidden that year. In late October, when most other villagers already had burned their fields, I started to suspect passive resistance, but the fact that Udin worked on his field together with and under the direction of Ma Bari's son Ma Isa makes this hypothesis disputable.

Another factor which might have contributed to making Udin more at ease at this time was that his mother in principle, that is, according to tradition, had the right to ask for him to return, even though it was not clear that Ma Bari would necessarily have conceded to such a request. Doing so would have contested the decision of the negotiations in Temiang, and to some extent challenged Ma Bari's authority, as well as somewhat discredited his attempts at arranging for Udin's continued stay in Temiang. In other words, it would have been bad form for his mother to ask for him, and she might not have done so if certain things had not happened.

Despite all that he had been through, and despite that he was forced to stay in Temiang, Udin never stopped liking Ma Bari. Nor did he show any signs of discontent when Ma Bari, after it became clear that it was too late for Udin and Ma Isa to burn their swidden site, arranged that the two would get together with Ma Isa's brother on his swidden (a typical *manti* arrangement). Similarly, Udin did not mean to upset Ma Bari when he ventured to sell some meat a few times during this period without first having distributed shares of it. However, he did do so, and this led to an argument between his mother and Ma Bari which made her much less content with staying in Temiang. I was not present to witness the resolution of the case which led her and Udin, with his wife and children, to return to Bermaung. The event was not much talked about, and it seems that Ma Bari and others were as confident as they could be in leaving the affair behind them in that manner. The departure of Udin and Rosa was something of a non-event, which hardly seemed to affect anyone, at least not openly. The only partial exception was Rosa's grandmother Tak Rosa, who appeared quite saddened, and admitted to missing them, but she did not discuss it much with other villagers.

Udin's situation in Temiang had probably become untenable after his attempt at making a swidden with Ma Isa failed. Ma Bari's solution of having the two join his son Ma Kelamo on his swidden had never been a very good idea: it would have been a waste of resources having four strong men (Ma Kelamo's son-in-law Mohar was also to join them) work on a field which could be tended by two. Ma Bari did not really want to keep Udin in Temiang against his will if the arrangement could not be seen as sound, or if it

could not be shown that significant gain would come from it (if nothing else, his reputation as a just and knowledgeable *manti* could have suffered from it). Although no one in Temiang found Udin's return to Bermaung totally unexpected, it had not been much talked about or foreseen with any certainty by anyone, so most people were still more or less unprepared when Udin and his family finally left Temiang.

Comparing the resolution of the events surrounding Udin's attempt at leaving Temiang after the lawsuit in Datai Munte, and his actual departure about half a year later, it can be noticed that the affairs were handled in very different, almost contrary ways. In the one case, there was intense negotiation and much formalization involving a large part of the community and several *manti*, whereas in the other, only a few people were engaged, no negotiations were conducted, and no attempts made at formalization. Despite the dissimilarity between the two cases, however, both represent very common ways to solve such problems, and we would get the wrong picture of Bentian society by considering just one of them.

The *manti* and other elders often manage to resolve various interpersonal problems and conflicts. In so doing they typically use formalizing strategies such as public negotiations, distribution of plates, speeches, and rituals, drawing on the ideals of integration and kin tie maintenance as they exert their authority. The authority of the *manti* is not, however, unlimited. Although open conflict is generally avoided (strong emotional expressions are rare in public), and the word of the elders is almost never openly contested, people still quite frequently manage to evade such authority and have things their own way. When this happens, it usually, and significantly, happens more or less unnoticed — off the record.

Like integration, autonomy is also an ideal among Bentians, even though, unlike integration, it is not publicly recognized and celebrated as such. The same is true also for the related ideal of economic self-sufficiency which, even though not representing an acknowledged value or something that it would be appropriate, if realized, to brag about in public, is an almost universal desire as well as something that indirectly provides some people with an incentive to look down on others in private (in comparison with some other Dayak groups, however, it appears that the relative importance of this ideal is small among the Bentian, and there is, for example, nothing resembling a "ranking system" based on degrees of self-sufficiency; see Helliwell 1995:364-69; cf. Tsing 1993:63-64).[92] As an expression of the ideal of autonomy, many Bentians stay most of the time on their swidden field, often with the usually unexpressed intention of getting beyond the authority, influence, or demands of some other people. This was also the case with Udin, whose preference for staying on his swidden rather than in the village was motivated, in

[92] One indication of this, perhaps, is that there is little constraint in asking for things (*sake*) from relatives, people do this routinely and with no apparent shame.

part, by the possibility of thus keeping the requests from his varying Temiang relatives down to a reasonable level. Even though he liked Ma Bari, he did in fact exhibit a greater reluctance in submitting to authority than most other young men in the village. Unlike them he did not, for instance, want to go to work for the logging companies, for the expressed reason that he disliked being ordered and pushed around. Even though he might have been more independent in this respect than most people in Bentian society, most Bentians seemed to enjoy the practical autonomy associated with the relatively solitary and easy-going life that they led on their swiddens (and frequently seemed to become somewhat more easy-going themselves than they would be in the village). A great proportion of the Bentian continued to spend most of their time on their swiddens, despite the strong government pressure to stay permanently in village dwellings.

As stated above, situations in which individual autonomy is conspicuously manifested, or interpersonal affairs resolved in contradistinction to kinship obligations, community interests, or the authority of the elders, frequently take the form of non-events. Rather than demonstrably take place, such non-events just happen; they eventuate, so to speak, or transpire. Alternatively, they may also take another form: they may occur as a result of deliberate effort but then secretively or furtively, as in the case of the practice of some people of eating newly caught game in the middle of the night in order to be able to avoid distributing it. People did not always live up to the ideals of kinship ideology and communal solidarity. The point is, however, that when they did not, they almost always kept a low profile. Similar characteristics as marked such situations when social connections were repudiated also marked such proceedings which diverged from good form, such as the hasty arrangement of Udin and Rosa's marriage after they already had started to see each other. Indeed, the frequency with which interpersonal affairs were dealt with in this manner during my fieldwork gave me the impression that they represented an ordinary way of managing such concerns, rather than some sort of an exception.

The fact that the adjustment and readjustment of interpersonal relationships among the Bentian at times involves extensive negotiation and formalization, whereas at other times things just seem to happen more or less invisibly and unintendedly, reflects the simultaneous salience of kinship authority and aspirations for individual autonomy and self-sufficiency in Bentian society. Resolving affairs of conflicting allegiances in the latter way enables outcomes which do not contest established authority and ideals of kinship and community solidarity, at the same time as they allow for the exercise of some amount of individual autonomy and potentially divisive interests. If collective interests are pursued, on the other hand, similar precautions need not be taken, and a variety of public and formal strategies can be employed to achieve the ends, which probably would be realized much less fully without such efforts, taking into consideration the inclusiveness of Bentian notions of relatedness, the dispersed Bentian settlement pattern,

and the lack of prescribed rules and specified sanctions defining particular kin obligations and their violation.

The way that things were handled when Udin left Temiang had the effect of leaving Ma Bari's authority unchallenged. It facilitated a convenient resolution of a more or less untenable situation. Furthermore, at that point in time so much time had already elapsed since Udin was (innocently, as it seems) determined guilty of sorcery that it was no longer plausible that he would harbor much resentment over the case — and for that sake be likely to discredit the community of Temiang. Most importantly, as things had turned out, when his swidden failed he was no longer as useful for the community as he had been, so it was much less easy for Ma Bari to resist Udin's mother when she finally asked for Udin to return. However, that Udin did not run away in the first place, or more persistently protest the outcome of the lawsuit in Datai Munte and the negotiations in Temiang, testifies both to the general authority of the elders and the widely shared ideals of integration, cooperation, and "good form" in Bentian society, as well as to a more particular concern with the maintenance of good kin relations on the part of Udin, and perhaps also to his own personal sense of good form.

One and half years after he had left Temiang, in August 1998, when I made a brief visit to Bermaung, Udin was about to make a trip to Temiang in order to bring a sack of rice seeds (*bini pare*) for sowing to Ma Bari and other of his affinal relatives in the village which they, like most people in the area, were lacking, as a result of the exceptional drought the preceding year (almost no one in the area got any rice harvest at all that year). Evidently, he was doing this wholly or mostly on his own initiative, perhaps as a gesture of good will, and without the knowledge of the people in Temiang. Whether he ultimately was doing it out of concern for his kin, or because of self-interest, I did not ask; that is perhaps irrelevant or at least inconsequential here, and he might not have known himself, any more than people usually knows such things in such situations. What matters here is that his kin relations mattered to him, and that his sense of obligation toward his affinal kin influenced his actions even when he was in a position where he could have ignored his obligations without any immediate consequences. Another indication of the influence of his affinal kin relations, which at the same time points to the limitations of their influence, was that Rosa's parents had visited him and Rosa a few months earlier in order to ask them to return to Temiang, a request that Udin's mother had turned down. Even though this attempt failed, it is quite likely that it induced Udin to bring the rice seeds to Temiang (after the request was turned down it became a motivation for him to make a compensating gesture of good will in order to maintain his reputation as a good relative among his Temiang kin). Moreover, regardless of whether it was instrumental in this respect, it points to the centrality, practical presence, and pressing force of such enactments of kin relationships in Bentian society.

The Character of Kinship Authority

So far I have analyzed some empirical data selected to illuminate how notions of relatedness can be a source of authority and influence people's actions among the Bentian. Among other things, I have used these data to point to the continuing salience of kinship in Bentian society and the importance of kin relations for intervillage movement. I have also addressed the inclusiveness of Bentian notions of relatedness and the relevance of reciprocity and material factors for such notions. Moreover, I have briefly discussed some ways in which kin connections can be used to exert authority and indicated the importance of formalization in this process. Finally, I have addressed the general unpredictability and situational adaptability which also frequently characterize Bentian kin relations, especially under such circumstances as those surrounding Udin's departure from Temiang. Throughout the discussion of these issues, an underlying concern has been with the relative autonomy and authority ensuing from the mediation of social relations by notions of relatedness. However, there are no absolute authorities or closure to events, even as there is much constraint and possibility of containment.

I shall proceed by discussing more explicitly what I have referred to as kinship authority, which forms, as I see it, a major form of authority in Bentian social life. Kinship authority, even if defined fairly narrowly, is a complex category, consisting of various special types of kin authority pertaining to specific kin relations. It includes parental authority and the mutual but gender-specific authority of spouses over each other. It also encompasses the authority of older siblings (*tuke*) over younger siblings (*ani*), elders over their younger kin, and that of parents-in-law (*tupu*) over their children-in-law (*benantu*). I will here comment on some of these kin authorities, although I will not extensively review them as they have been discussed by other anthropologists for other bilateral Southeast Asian societies and they generally seem to conform to their reported equivalencies there (cf. Carsten 1997; Peletz 1988; Sather 1997). My interest is not so much with the specifics of particular types of kin relations as with kinship authority in a more general sense, as common to all kin relations. Therefore, I will concentrate on some basic features characterizing these kin authorities, including what might be called the dispersal of fostering responsibilities, the respect pertaining to intergenerational relations, and the equality expected to inform collateral relations. As among Malays, the two latter, in particular, can be observed to represent basic principles of Bentian kinship (cf. McKinley 1983:355-56).

Parental authority can be described as mild, even if children, especially when they get a little older, are expected to obey, and normally show uncompromising obedience toward, their parents. Both parents have an affectionate and rather lenient relationship with their children and the father is no more a distinct authority than the mother. Moreover, parental authority is by no means exclusive: authority over children is not

solely the responsibility or privilege of parents. Grandparents often take a very active part in the upbringing of their grandchildren, especially the mother's parents with whom the conjugal couple is more likely to spend more time, the ideal of alternating ambilocality notwithstanding. Sometimes they assume an even more important role than the parents, for example, when children get ill. Such influence of grandparents may be expected especially when the parents are young. However, other older relatives, such as aunts or uncles, may also play an important role. The mother's sister and her husband are also important in this respect, and they are particularly likely to adopt the child. When children are small their older siblings or sometimes their older classificatory siblings (cousins) also take an important role in their upbringing. The relation between older and younger siblings resembles to a degree the relation between other older and younger kin, although the relationship is less hierarchical. Like the other above-mentioned authorities it is, in a sense, an instance of elder authority. Elder authority, or the kin authority which prevails upon the relation between older and younger kin, forms a backbone in Bentian society and I will discuss it again in Chapter 4 where I will consider another of its manifestations, namely, that which pertains to ancestors over their descendants. Respect for seniority, but also the responsibility of elders for younger kin, is repeatedly proclaimed. Older kin are said "to own" or "be the base of" (*puun*) their younger kin. Old or middle aged men who are regarded as kin or housegroup leaders (*manti aben*) exert considerable authority over their followers, often in precisely this capacity. Yet another form of elder authority is that exerted by parents-in-law and other senior in-laws over their children-in-law are expected to show particular respect toward the former (whom they address with the same kinship terms as their cognatic relatives, i.e. as "mother," "father," "parental sibling," "grandmother," etc.). Young people until about the age of thirty are generally addressed by elders (*tuha*) as "children" or "immature persons" (*tia*), even if they may have several children of their own.

Collaterals, in distinction to relatives in ascending or descending generations, are (with the partial exception of the weak hierarchical relation between older and younger siblings) ideally perceived as equals. Thus, in theory at least, the authority between collaterals is reciprocal or balanced, which does not mean that it is not expected to be considerable: extensive mutual solidarity and obligations are the ideal. In practice it is not always balanced, but this reflects factors other than recognized kinship ideology. Thus, as a result of several factors — e.g. forest familiarity, access to wage labor, shamanship (which today has become predominantly male), national ideology (which postulates that men should be household heads and assume a more prominent public role than women) — husbands often have slightly more authority over their wives than the wives have over them. But this authority is not a function of their kinship position *per se*, and women are not expected to defer to their husbands any more than to men in general (an indication

of this is the role of Nen Pare's sister Nen Bujok at the lawsuit against Udin).[93] In addition to an ideal of equality, collateral relations are also informed by an ideal of companionship entailing a greater concern for balanced reciprocity than that which applies to other kin relations, and an associated sense of these relations as in some respect conditional.

Collaterals, including both cognatic and affinal ones, ideally should be like siblings. Like the Malay word *saudara* (see McKinley 1983:336), the Bentian term *peyari* stands in a more restricted sense for "sibling," but can also be used to indicate any collateral relative (whether related with ego cognatically, affinally, or as friend). As already observed there is a practical foundation for such a terminological extension: siblings-in-law (including both spouse's siblings and sibling's spouses) provide cooperation as often as cognatic collaterals. In fact, the relations between affinal collaterals (including, not the least significantly in this connection, that between "coparents-in-law," *sanget*) are informed by the ideals of equality and reciprocity to an even higher degree than those between cognatic collaterals. This is indicated by the principle of ambilocality and various symmetrical or complementary wedding arrangements designed to balance the expenses and statuses of the bride's and the groom's families. However, collateral (and other) affinal relations should also have a certain formal quality (even in the case of close endogamy), as indicated by the obligatory use of special kinship terms and the prohibition against using personal names and, perhaps, by a special joking relationship between siblings-in-law.

The idiom of siblingship thus provides an idiom for affinal as well as for other collateral relations, particularly in its aspects of symbolizing unity and a basic similarity.[94] Most particularly, however, it is same-sex siblings (who are conceived of as particularly close and whose children consequently are not permitted to marry without ritual compensation), who are invested with this representative value, even though these relations may sometimes be especially prone to dissension and conflict. Siblingship, however, is not just an empty signifier. Sibling relations epitomize their symbolic meaning. The terminological and metaphorical extension for cousins, as for non-cognatic collaterals, is motivated by the fact that it forms — partly as a result of childhood familiarity, and partly as a result of residential patterns favoring sibling co-residence in adulthood (i.e. *lou* residence) — a primary basis of kin support in Bentian society. Sibling

[93] In the past, women apparently had more prominent public roles than today. Female shamanship and *manti*ship were both relatively common.

[94] Since the 1970s, many authors have postulated a central structural significance for siblingship as a complement to descent and other principles of social organization (e.g. Kelly 1977; Marshall 1983; McKinley 1983; Peletz 1988). The importance of siblingship in Bentian society, especially with respect to housegroups, but also in general, supports these findings, which have often been employed to dismiss the apparent lack of order (from a descent perspective) in cognatic societies.

relations also tend to have a relative stability in the general flux of multi-stranded kin relations, thus further warranting the use of siblingship as a general idiom for relatedness.

What, then, can be said to characterize kinship authority in a general sense, that is, in terms of the general expectations and obligations that most Bentians have in respect to most categories of kin? What is common to all the above-mentioned kin authorities, and of what can kinship authority be said to consist in its capacity as a *source of authorization* (including both self-authorization and other-authorization)? In a very basic sense, kinship authority can be said to consist of values, or more precisely, a set of very basic values which constantly are invoked — and expressed as imperatives — in various speech situations. These values include, most importantly, the notions that relatives (*kaben*) should be treated well, that ties with relatives should not be broken, that having a kin tie with someone (whether cognatic, affinal or classificatory) implies a moral obligation to help that person, and that food and other material resources should be shared (*meru*) with relatives (and neighbors). Another basic, closely related value which does not specifically concern relatives but which often is highly important in relations with them is the idea that prestations, whether services or gifts, should be reciprocated (*males*), and debts repaid. Still another fundamental value of which kinship authority is made up is represented by the notion that relatives, in principle, should stay in one place (*nono be erai tono*), or at least, regularly concentrate (*berinuk*). These values are elementary in the sense that they are regularly invoked and known by all, and no one, to my knowledge, would deny their importance. Adding to their significance is a perceived risk of so-called supernatural retribution attaching to their defiance.

But kinship among the Bentian should not be understood as being only or most essentially about values or principles. As I have discussed, rules and precepts are not particularly important in Bentian kin interaction (the values discussed above I would, following Kelly [1977:1] call principles rather than rules, as they do not, in distinction to the latter, "incorporate a restrictive designation of the context in which a given structural principle is applicable"). But the same holds true also for values in the sense that people's behavior cannot always be understood as a conscious application of them or, at least, apprehended with reference to them alone.[95] The lack of detailed rules regarding behavior with relatives, and the very generality of those values which inform Bentian kin interaction, presuppose the existence of additional motives or other forms of determinants in most practical situations. In fact, in so far as Bentian kin interaction may be said to be guided by ideational categories, it is primarily by much less explicit

[95] That this is so should perhaps go without saying, in so far as the discussion regards *values*, strictly speaking. Values are, by definition, so general that their contextual application is unclear. As Talcott Parsons expresses it "[v]alues are modes of normative orientation of action in a social system, which define the main direction of action without reference to specific goals or more detailed situations or structures" (1958:198).

conceptual schemes applied to specific types of contextual environments and appropriated by the actor through concrete instances of regularly performed social action (cf. D'Andrade 1995: 122-149).[96]

It is, in a sense, activities rather than ideas, which form the framework of Bentian kinship authority. Values do not constitute rules as much as ideals, and only occasionally provide motives, while at other times they are deliberately ignored or simply not consciously invoked. Whether they are invoked has much to do with if the actor performing an action to which they are potentially applicable has any concrete interest in invoking them, or whether someone else affected by that action has. On the other hand, the social constellation and type of context in which the actor finds himself decisively affect his behavior. Similarly, the past experiences of the individual actor in the same type of situations and the same concrete social constellations also significantly influence his behavior. The reason that kinship functions as an authority for most actors is, I contend, largely a result of their experiences of concrete social activities, which is what has most critically molded their understanding of kinship. Examples of concrete social activities instrumental in this regard are those activities when some actor deliberately and explicitly invokes kinship values for some concrete purpose (as a strategic device when asking someone for something, for example), but also those events when these ideals are voiced for their own sake (e.g. the elders' evening monologues) or otherwise abstractly expressed.[97] They also include events where kinship values are indirectly expressed by way of example, as in the case of incessant meal invitations, as well as other activities in which no explicit reference to kinship values is made, but the behavior of the people involved conforms to these values (as tacitly apprehended by the actor but seldom perceived consciously, and then typically in retrospect). It is all these activities which — especially in a society where explication is neither the rule nor an ideal — put their deepest mark on the actor. In other words, the experiences imprinted by the actor's trajectories in social space form, I suggest, the most fundamental factor determining

[96] What I am referring to here conforms rather closely to what cognitive anthropologists and psychologists have referred to as "schemas." Schemas can be described, following Mandler (1984:55-56, quoted in D'Andrade 1995:122) as "abstract [schematic] representations of environmental regularities" which are "built up in the course of interaction with the environment," and activated by concrete events, mostly in an automatic manner which involves no "awareness on the part of perceiver-comprehender." Schemas not only reflect but also serve to organize experience: "we comprehend events in terms of the schemas that they activate." Schemas notably operate in a very different way from rules and represent a kind of knowledge quite different from rule-based knowledge. They seem to function according to what in the cognitive sciences has become known as a "connectionist network" model (see D'Andrade 1995:138-149). According to this model,"thinking consists primarily of pattern recognition; learning "what goes with what" by association" (D'Andrade 1995:140).

[97] The pervasive use of kinship terms for address among the Bentian, which sets them off to some extent from their Dayak neighbors, may also be used as an example.

Bentians' interaction with their relatives. Bentian kinship authority is practically constituted.

Following Bourdieu, I want to stress the general unimportance of rules, which, as he (1977:73) argues, one would have to "postulate in an infinite number" in order to succeed in explaining practice. Also in line with Bourdieu, who believes that "dispositions ... and situations combine synchronically to constitute a determinate conjuncture" (1977:83), I want to stress the importance of past and present social contexts and constellations as determinants of social action. However, unlike Bourdieu, and following de Certeau (1984), I contend that social action is always a kind of *bricolage* entailing a greater or lesser degree of creativity on the part of the actor, involving an active process of "making do" with the limited resources and restrictions inherent in situations or internalized by the actor. Despite his deceptively subject-sympathetic concept of "habitus" — which he also refers to as "generative schemes" (e.g. Bourdieu 1977:95), and as the "generative principle of regulated improvisations" (1977:78) — which appears to locate the motor of social action "within" the social actor, Bourdieu nevertheless regards, as Jane Fajans (1997:283) has critically argued, structure as external to the habitus, and social action as ultimately determined by "objective conditions" above or beyond practice (cf. Bourdieu 1977:72, 77). Contrary to these notions (which are also those of conventional social theory), Fajans argues that we should not regard structure as external to social action, but instead view social activities as "the primary units of social and cultural structure" and thus treat "the locus of structure" as immanent in those activities (1997:264; cf. also Giddens 1984:37). Such a view seems especially appropriate for an understanding of Bentian kinship behavior, which, as I see it, is essentially produced by practice (i.e. by regularly performed social action), and typically associated with a higher degree of reflexive mediation and control than what Bourdieu's theory allows.[98] An indication of the general importance of practical experience in determining agency among the Bentian that repeatedly struck me during fieldwork was what I have come to think of as "the authority of experience," that is, a common tendency of informants to dismiss theoretical knowledge as not true knowledge or a valid grounds for action or belief, and to advance personal observation as the only reliable source of knowledge.[99] Statements of the type

[98] An alternative theoretical framework which could be used to make sense of how action is practically constituted without depriving the subject of agency to the extent this occurs in Bourdieu's theory, is the schema theory of cognitive anthropologists (see D'Andrade 1995: 147-49). Both the habitus and the schema concept consist of "implicit recognition procedures, not rules," although they seem to differ in respect to the extent to which they presuppose that people are determined by these procedures.

[99] This tendency is reported also by Michael Jackson, whose phenomenological approach to anthropology has influenced my approach to authority. Jackson (1996:35) discusses the failure of the peasant informants of the Russian psychologist A. R. Luria to respond adequately to syllogisms presented for the purpose of testing cognitive development and their refusal "to discuss any topics that

"how would I know, I wasn't present" or "I can't tell, I did not see it" were exasperatingly common, and reflected, I propose, a recalcitrant everyday empiricism congruent with the importance of the notions of "practical association" that I argued are central in determining Bentian relations to land (see Chapter 2).

Practical Kinship

One of the most indicative expressions of how Bentian kinship authority is practically constituted is the significance for relational closeness of what could be referred to as "practical" as opposed to "genealogical" relatedness. Being close (*dini*) is as much a function of practical association as it is of genealogical or affinal connection. Theoretical connection is insufficient in itself to make people close (due to their sheer number, not all relatives can become close). It has to be complemented by practical association. Practical association, on the other hand, can make people close regardless of any *a priori* existent tie: non-relatives can be and frequently are regarded as equally close as relatives — and in such cases referred to by kinship terms. In a sense, because of this feature of Bentian notions of relatedness, Bentian kinship can, I suggest, be regarded as practical. In turn, this feature reflects, and itself contributes to, a certain conceptual and practical flexibility which perhaps most appropriately could be described as a "pragmatic attitude toward kinship." This "attitude" (strictly speaking, I do not refer to attitudes but to dispositions) provides another sense in which Bentian kinship can be regarded as practical. Together these two aspects of practical kinship, and some others such as the lack of formal and specific regulations pertaining to particular kin relations, and the lack of discreteness and permanency of kin groups and categories, provide additional support for the interactional basis of kinship authority which I have been outlining, and thus they deserve closer examination.

Kinship for Bentians is not restricted to kinship in the sense of cognatic kinship. Bentians use the idiom of kinship or "the genealogical idiom" not only for genealogical kin. Terms of address and reference are "extended" to include affines as well as friends and neighbors, as is *peyari*, the Bentian term for sibling, collateral relative, and friend, and *kaben*, the most general Bentian term for "relative."[100] This extendability also

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went beyond personal experience." Jackson interprets these responses as expressions of an attitude assigning priority to "practical accomplishment" over "cognitive understanding." In his view, they reflect not a "*lack* of abstract cognitive skills" but a "*positive* preference for other skills more compatible with immediate social concerns" (1996:35, orig. italics).

[100] Interestingly, *kaben* seems to be a cognate with the Iban term *kaban*, the term used by Freeman to designate the kindred. This is worth noting as Freeman argues for the use of an exclusively cognatic kindred concept (excluding affines) in the Iban context. However, just like the Bentian *kaben*, the Iban *kaban* also "[i]n its widest connotation ... refers not only to all of an individual's cognatic and affinal

characterizes Bentian kin group designations, such as the term *aben*, which is used to refer to a range of several more or less inclusive social categories.[101] However, there are more than considerations of practicality informing this usage, as is evidently the case with the similarly extendable (or contractible) Langkawi Malay term *kampung*, which, according to Janet Carsten (1997:161-62) variously refers to a village, a subvillage, a compound or "land cleared for the purpose of house building." Carsten (1997:162) suggests that this term "expresses through its generality an unwillingness to differentiate people from each other, and ... thereby stresses the unity of the community." It seems to me that similar considerations also lie behind the polysemy of the Bentian term *aben*, as well as behind that of *kaben* and other, similarly extendable kinship terms and kin group designations used by the Bentian or other peoples in Southeast Asia (cf. e.g. Schrauvers 1999:313).

A general reluctance to make explicit distinctions between categories of people is, at any rate, strongly characteristic of the Bentian as of various other egalitarian societies in the so-called peripheries of the region (see e.g. Carsten 1997; Gibson 1986; Tsing 1993). I propose that this reluctance also motivates "the extension of kinship" more generally among Bentians, and that both the former and the latter phenomena, as well as the general egalitarian ethos which pervades much of Bentian social life (and collateral relations in particular) reflect a concern for social harmony and the authority of collectivities over the individual, a concern which in its turn is motivated by the conditions set by a relative scarcity (or at least, erratic accessibility) of material and social resources in their world, and the potential of dissension and fission ensuing from these conditions. The principles of sharing and reciprocity also reflect the same concerns as do other kinship values (e.g. those advocating kin concentration, which work to counteract the effects of subsistence-motivated residential dispersion). In fact, Bentian kinship, as an ideational phenomenon,

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kin but also to his (or her) friends and acquaintances" (Freeman 1960a:70).

[101] The Bentian term *aben,* glossed by Weinstock (1983:103) as "household," is variously used to designate households, extended families, the inhabitants of a longhouse or those of a local community. The use of other Bentian kin group terms such as *buhan* and *leluhen*, also follows the same pattern. Indeed there seems to be no specific or primary meanings attached to these virtually interchangeable terms to distinguish them from each other, nor could I elicit any other, more specific terms for such phenomena as kindreds, housegroups, and descent categories for which all these terms may be used (a minor difference between *aben* and the two latter terms is that the latter are not, in distinction to the former, used to signify very small kin units such as swidden households or conjugal couples with children). This first struck me, as I had, on the basis of data on other Dayaks such as those by Hudson on the Ma'anyan (e.g. Hudson & Hudson 1978), expected to come up with at least some number of relatively discrete and distinctively named social units. Now I am inclined to believe that a similarly wide range of referents for terms signifying social categories as those reported for the above-mentioned might be very prevalent in Southeast Asian societies, and that indications of a greater degree of designative or referenial discreteness may sometimes reflect a scholarly concern for order and coherence more than any conditions prevailing in the societies under consideration. In the case of the term *aben*, I propose that its generality may also be taken as an indication of the limited autonomy of the household in Bentian society.

may perhaps most importantly be said to provide a moral code, a code which is predominantly used to maintain and establish bonds and compelling obligations between people. It conforms in this respect to McKinley's (1983:360) understanding of kinship as "a conceptual model ... which clarifies and gives definite shape to [a] framework of trust." Its force as such a moral code arises to a significant extent from certain socio-material conditions in the society where it is employed, and it is due to the persistence of these conditions that its force is greater, and invocations of kinship terminology and obligations are more common, among Bentians than among their more modernized, residentially concentrated and wage-labor engaged Luangan neighbors, of who I often heard commend the Bentian for the respect with which they treated their relatives, while lamenting the erosion of kin values and a spread of individualistic tendencies in their own societies. In connection here it can be suggested that another factor explaining some of the force of Bentian kinship authority may be the same that Carsten (1997) and Gibson (1987) have proposed to explain the egalitarianism of the Langkawi Malays and the Buid of Mindoro, that is, the position of these societies within the larger regions of which they form part. Kinship values are for Bentians in the contemporary world an important aspect of their self-identity and tradition (*adat*), something which sets them off, in a predominantly positively valued respect, from their downriver neighbors among whom these values are seen to be held in less regard.

The central significance of Bentian kinship as a moral code directs our attention to the possibility that the primary importance of the genealogical idiom may not be literal, but rather, metaphoric (McKinley 1983:359-61, 2001). In other words, usage of the genealogical idiom may not as much reflect concern with blood or some other substance, or with one's blood relations as opposed to other people, as a concern with establishing bonds and obligations, a possibility which would explain the lack of inhibition among some peoples such as the Bentian to extend relationship terminology expressed in this idiom beyond genealogical relatives to whomever it is vital and practically expedient to maintain such relations with. Rather than a referential system, kinship may in fact most primarily represent, as McKinley (2001) has argued in a recent article, "a philosophy," more precisely, a "social philosophy" which "founds obligations" (2001:144). It seems to me that this is correct at least in the case of the Bentian, and that a concern with establishing lasting relations and compelling obligations is what primarily motivates the rather pervasive — and flexible — use of the genealogical idiom in their case. This is not to say that the genealogical form in which relationship terminology is expressed is insignificant or arbitrary. As McKinley observes, the genealogical idiom is "good to think" because it is made available by nature and provides a coherent and widely adaptable model for classifying people and their relations, a model which has the advantage of naturalizing the demands which are expressed in this idiom by making the relations which it is used to designate appear given and incontestable. (2001:159-160).

The "concrete natural symbolism" of the genealogical idiom thus "convey[s] the idea of there being some social locus of unquestioned obligation" (McKinley 2001:143). This is another factor which contributes to explain the force of kinship authority.

The flexibility and practical character of Bentain kinship, then, is not an indication of its unimportance. As has become evident in this chapter, kinship ideology is an important authority affecting social life among the Bentian, and to demonstrate this — in contrast to scholars (e.g. King 1978a:10-12, Rousseau 1978:87-89) who have argued for a relative unimportance of kinship in Borneo societies — has also been an objective in this chapter. However, it is mainly kinship "here and now" that is important, while inactive ties, unless relevant to concerns in the present, are normally less influential. Strong obligations attach mainly to "activated" relations. This fact — like the concomitant fact that "forgetting ties" and "discovering ties" are important Bentian kinship experiences — can itself be seen, I suggest, as an expression of the pragmatic attitude toward kinship. Another aspect of the same attitude is a creativity in managing or manipulating multiple ties which commonly characterize people's longterm kin interactions, and which forms a valuable resource which people may employ to get through difficult situations. An example of a person involved in such multiple tie management (a practice which itself offers an illustration of "social bricolage" or "tactics" in de Certeau's sense) is the *manti* Ma Lombang, Rosa's adoptive father Ma Bure's father, whom Udin helped with swidden work during his first two years in Temiang. Besides Udin and his own son Ma Bure, Ma Lombang at different periods employed the services of several other men in the village — including Nen Pare's and Nen Bujok's husbands Ma Mar and Ma Putup, and his wife's granddaughter Nen Bubu's husband Ma Bubu — with whom he was affinally related through their wives. By shifting affiliations in this way he was able to artfully use these ties to his own advantage, at the same as he minimized the weight of his burden on each of these relations.

A crucial consequence of the inclusiveness of notions of relatedness — and the strong interdiction on exclusive social thinking in any form — is that some individuals (*manti* and elders in particular) can use them to their advantage, or, less selfishly (although this often amounts to the same thing), to the advantage of the community or other groups (e.g. housegroups), in ways that significantly restrict the autonomy of some people. Lack of clear boundaries between kin categories is, in fact, largely a consequence of this authoritative use of notions of relatedness which frequently limits the autonomy of individuals as well as households. As a consequence, the household is not, despite its corporate properties, including status as judicial subject in curing rituals, a "sovereign country" (Freeman 1958:22) any more than extended families or housegroups ever were. There are frequently strong pulls from outside all these categories, from other kinspersons within the community or in other communities, including both ordinary people with no special status, who usually present personal requests for help or contributions, and

individuals with a special status, that is, the *manti*, who in large part receive their status from precisely these kin relations, and who typically present not only personal requests, but also requests made in the name of groups or communities. These demands are successful largely as a result of the authority of kinship as a moral code, whose importance is made more important by the inclusiveness of Bentian notions of relatedness.

The inclusiveness of Bentian notions of relatedness among the Bentian, which helps to create a very large pool of social resources, and thus facilitates increased flexibility in the use of such resources, is perhaps most obviously demonstrated by the prevalence of adoption or adoption-like arrangements, of which there were several examples in Udin's story.[102] Partly, the prevalence of adoption is a result of high infant mortality and low fertility (the latter frequently provides a motive for people to lend out their children to childless relatives), but far from all adopters are childless,[103] and as some of these and other examples show, adoption is frequently employed for other reasons — for example,

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[102] Examples of adoption or adoption-like arrangements involving people in Udin's story (the distinction between fosterage and adoption is not always entirely clear among the Bentian) are the following (see Fig. 1): Rosa was adopted by her mother's first cousin Ma Bure and his wife Nen Simur. Ma Lombang adopted his brother's children Nen Pare and Nen Bujok, and his sister's child Ma Sarakang (when they had already grown up and their parents died). Before her marriage to him, Ma Lombang's wife Tak Lodot had also adopted her son's wife Nen Keladi when her son died (because they were close, and wanted to maintain their relation) making Ma Lombang, by extension, the adoptive father also of Nen Keladi. Ma Mar adopted Mudai, the Benuaq Dayak man who was Udin's swidden neighbor, and who became his friend, even though there was no genealogical connection (*purus*) between them, just as there was none between Mudai and Ma Mar. Before adopting Mudai, however, Ma Mar, with Nen Pare, had already adopted Ma Mar's second cousin's child Seneng who later, after Ma Mar's adoption of Mudai, became Mudai's wife (this, it appears, is not an unsual arrangement: before marrying Nen Pare, Ma Mar himself had married his father's brother's adoptive daughter Nen Mar, and by marrying Rosa, Udin married the adoptive child of his mother's second cousin by whom he might himself have been adopted if he had stayed in her household, instead of in her sister's, before marrying Rosa). Ma Buno, a person whom we will hear more about in Chapter 5, adopted Buno, a child distantly related to his wife, as a result of a request that the child's father made of him following instructions that he had received in a dream. Relatively wealthy people (and the *manti*) are especially likely adopters (cf. Schrauvers 1999). For example, Kakah Ramat's son Ma Lutar, who had made some money trading rattan, adopted several relatives' children, as did Nen Bola, Ma Lombang's sister, who was a shopkeeper in neighboring Datai Munte.

[103] A particular, semi-institutionalized form of lending out children occurs between the child's parents and their parents, particularly the mother's parents (an example here is the children of Ma Bari's and Tak Ningin's daughter Nen Tali who stayed most of my fieldwork in Ma Bari's *lou*, while their mother lived with her husband in neighboring Datai Munte). When the mother's parents no longer have any small children of their own (or any grandchildren) in their household, their children often surrender one (or several) of their children to them for a period "so that they have company" (*adi naan tuyang*). Another relation commonly involving child transfer is that between a woman and her sister, which is conceived of as particularly close (as an indication of the closeness of the relation, the terms of address used by children for their parents' same-sex siblings are, regardless of whether adoption or fosterage by them takes place or not, "mother," *ine* and "father," *uma*: see Appendix 1). As in other societies (e.g. see Carsten 1997; Trawick 1990), the sharing of children is essential to kin integration and social organization.

because it can signal a transformation of relations between non-kin into kin relations, or because it can serve to establish closer relations (or maintain close relations) between parents and adoptive parents, or because it can serve to relieve parents with many children — and so itself forms an example of practical kinship.

The institutions of polygamy and sororate/levirate marriage can also be seen as examples of the flexibility characterizing practical kinship, at the same time as they reflect a concern about maintaining those kin ties that one already has, and thus again point to the authority of kinship ideology, and the relative importance of kin relations established or reinforced through interaction. Unwillingness to break pre-existing ties was presented to me as a motive for both practices, and it also seems to have been a principal factor at work in those cases on which I have information. Bentians say that it is not good for people to be alone. As among the Teduray (Tiruray) of Mindanao, there exists a strong cultural imperative that no one should be left out or, as the Teduray express it, that "everyone needs to be in a [cooking] pot" (i.e. part of a household, and, preferably, of a sexual union) (Schlegel 1998:114-15, 125-26). Therefore, if someone's spouse dies (or leaves them, which frequently happens), one should remarry, and most people would try to do so, unless already quite old, or at least move in with some relative, if one already does not live with one. However, the Bentian are, as they themselves often complain, few people (*putik unuk*): there is, in their sparsely populated region, not always a marriage partner available (in fact, finding a spouse of any kind — and not just an appropriate one — is for many people a very pressing problem). As an extension of this logic, people, and their kin (who typically arrange their marriages) are frequently willing to accept quite flexible arrangements in order to avoid being left without a partner. In other words, rather than become, or have someone else, left out, they may resort to or accept polygamy. Another very important motive for the institution of polygamy is barrenness, which, as already mentioned, is very common.[104] Thus someone may, in order to resolve this problem, take a new partner, but keep the old one. Barrenness seems, in fact, to be a factor in a majority of Bentian polygamous marriages (whether polyandrous or polygynous). Not breaking pre-existing ties is also, as just said, a motive for sororate and levirate, as well as for other monogamous remarriages (which, like polygamous marriages, are frequently with spouses related to the first spouse).[105] In addition to

[104] With respect to polygyny, there is also another, special motive motivating this practice, which is, or rather used to be (official polygynous marriages have recently declined, reflecting the demise of the institution of title-based leadership), particularly common among men of high status (i.e. *manti* of some kind) who through these marriages demonstrated their ability to provide (materially and sexually) for more than one wife.

[105] Several polygamous marriages that I recorded had been made with "co-spouses" (*meruoi*) who were siblings or cousins with each other, particularly in the case of polygynous unions involving male *manti* (in such cases practical considerations relating to marriage payments and the fact that the closeness of the spouses was assumed to counteract tension between them probably represented

enabling maintenance of the old relations with the spouse's kin, such marriages are also advantageous, people remarked to me, because they mean that one does not have to become subjected to the potential troubles and dangers, and, perhaps most importantly, the division of property, which the initiation of new relations may involve (cf. Schlegel 1970:79-81) .

The institutions of polygamy and sororate/levirate thus reflect the importance of what I call practical kinship and, more particularly, the principle that one wants to hold on to and continue building on prior relations because these are relations which one already knows and in which one has invested a lot, emotionally and materially. Fear of strangers is probably also an important underlying factor in these cases, although it seems to me that such fear is essentially about fear of people that one does not know rather than about fear of non-kin.[106] I consider Anne Schiller's (1997:94-108) interpretation of similar fears among the Ngaju as ultimately deriving from a lack of genealogical knowledge, making non-kin potential *hantuen* (malevolent spirit in human guise), as somewhat misleading if applied to the Bentian situation.[107] In the first place, Bentians are generally not cautious in their dealings with non-kin because they suspect them of being spirits (although they occasionally do, but then they also sometimes suspect kin and domestic animals of being spirits). Rather, they are suspicious of whether they can be trusted in a more general sense; whether they can, for instance, be expected to provide some services in return for others, or whether they for some reason (usually unspecified) are likely to hurt or mistreat them. Second, Bentians are not so much fearful of non-kin as of people with whom they have had no or little experience. Again, it is not kinship in a strictly genealogical or some other theoretical sense which is decisive here, but rather relatedness in a more practical sense, as based on familiarity (people are not afraid of non-kin whom they know well). Kinship in a more formal sense does sometimes matter, it is true, in the sense that a

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important factors). Not all polygamous unions were with related co-spouses, however. Another common pattern was for men who stayed for prolonged periods in different villages to marry unrelated women from these villages.

[106]It seems pertinent here to make reference to Storrie (2003:416) who says with reference to the Hoti of Venezuela that "the world of kin ... is composed of all non-strangers, in other words, anyone who has always been part of one's life-world is a relative." Even though Bentian notions of relatedness are not entirely similar to the remarkably non-genealogical notions of this people (whom Storrie 2003:407 describe as lacking "any notion of genealogical relatedness between persons") the logic of thinking referred to in this quotation illuminates Bentian notions as well.

[107] It seems that there might be some differences in Ngaju and Bentian notions about cognates and affines which at least partly explain the differences in interpretation here. For instance, Schiller (1997:107) states that among the Ngaju the bones of one's spouse may not be included in the same bone repository as oneself if the spouse was not also cognatically related, whereas among the Bentian cognatically unrelated spouses and other cognatically unrelated kin can be included along with cognates in bone repositories. Indicative of this difference between the two groups, blood also seems to have a greater cultural importance as a symbol of relatedness among the Ngaju.

discovery of a genealogical link between two unacquainted persons probably would make them more well-disposed toward each other, or at least increase their interest in each other (a couple of encounters of such discoveries that I had support this hypothesis). Land use rights and heirlooms are also primarily inherited bilaterally (through both blood and adoptive links). Because of the indisputable practical value that kin relations have, genealogical kinship interests Bentians in some contexts (one indication of this is the above-mentioned patrilines that some men keep). But genealogical connection is not the reason that people trust kin. Bentians generally expect kinspersons to be well-disposed toward them because they assume the sense of obligation to be reciprocal, and because they have practically experienced kin relations as providing support and security. Kin are trusted and kinship values are compelling because of what kin and kinship have meant for them in practice.

A quotation from Michelle Rosaldo in condensed form sums up much of the importance of what could be referred to as "the practical element" which seems to be at the heart of both Ilongot and Bentian notions of relatedness: "Because Ilongots experience kinship as the basis of cooperative support — and frequent contact is considered a prerequisite of true kinship — no man wants to live further than necessary from his relations" (1980:186). There are exceptions in that some people sometimes want to keep a distance from others so as to preserve a degree of autonomy, but on the whole, most people try to maintain most of their kin relations, and do so precisely because they want or have to, and consider it to be the natural order of things. In so far as we are concerned about its *effects*, kinship should perhaps not be viewed primarily as an ideational category, but rather as consisting of social relations which press themselves upon people in interaction, not just because of how these relations are conceived, but also, and as much, because of how they are bound up with materially embedded everyday practices, because of how people in a very concrete sense, through requests and needs, are entangled in the webs of their kin relations.

Kinship by Default? — Some Concluding Remarks on the Importance of Kinship Authority among the Bentian

Appell (1976:151), particularly in connection to Borneo, has noted that "in small-scale societies ... social isolates [i.e. groups] may contain only kin by default." Somewhat similarly, King (1978a:10) has stated that "bilaterality is a defining characteristics of Bornean societies by default." What these two scholars have in mind is the fact that it is not always kinship, at least not kinship strictly speaking, which in Borneo societies determines group recruitment or other aspects of interpersonal relations (e.g. rights and obligations), even though, on the face of it, it may appear so. The reason for this illusion

is simply that most people in many Bornean communities are related — or at least, consider themselves to be so. But instead of kinship it is in reality often other factors, such as rank or residence, or a combination of kinship and other factors, which are instrumental in regulating such phenomena (see King 1978a, for a discussion of this condition with special reference to rank, Sather 1976, for one with special reference to residence). Consequently, in this view, kinship in Borneo is not particularly important as an "organizing principle," even though it is admittedly important as an "idiom," and a general preference for endogamy is recognized (these two factors, endogamy and kinship's use as an idiom, are of course what enabled the alleged misperception of kinship in the first place).

These observations do, in some respects, support the understanding of Bentian kinship that I have developed here. In the first place, cognatic kinship, as opposed to other forms of relatedness, is not particularly important. Housegroups and ego-centered action groups include affines and other persons with whom one is not related strictly speaking. Second, kinship alone, whether in the sense of cognatic or affinal relatedness, cannot explain patterns of group membership and interpersonal loyalties. Bentians do not, for example, trust kin because they are relatives, but rather because the people that they know and are extensively involved with are their relatives (whereas those that they do not know and are only marginally involved with tend to be non-relatives or at least considered as such: note Nen Pare's family's targeting of Udin as the one who had made her sick). In other words, it is frequently not kinship, in the conventional anthropological sense, which is instrumental in shaping interpersonal relationships among the Bentian — even though they typically understand such relationships in the idiom of kinship — but rather something like familiarity (and familiarity often comes down to residence which is indeed frequently more important than kinship: how are we otherwise to understand the behavior of Udin's cognatic relatives during his hearing in Temiang?). Are we to conclude, then, that kinship is unimportant among the Bentian?

No, such a conclusion would of course not be fully acceptable. Bentians, it is true, use kinship, no matter how we define it, very flexibly: sometimes it is emphatically invoked, while at other times, when the relation in question is not currently of pragmatic use, it is almost ignored. However, as soon as relatedness has been invoked it is usually very difficult to ignore. As a result of the facts that the ideal of relatedness and the obligations associated with it are so widely affirmed in principle and so vitally useful for successful co-existence and individual well-being, there is both strong social pressure and good utilitarian reasons to respond affirmatively to claims made in the name of relatedness — and such claims are made often. The fact that kinship is nebulous in the sense of kinship terminology and obligations are extendable to genealogical non-kin does not subtract from its importance in this respect but rather adds to it as it increases the frequency of such claims. Thus kinship — especially if defined broadly as relations for which kinship

terminology is applied — is important as a criterion for action among the Bentian, particularly in such situations as when one is confronted with claims that are made in the name of kinship. What I have called the practical character of Bentian kinship is thus a factor contributing to — rather than reducing — the importance of kinship in Bentian society.

Relatedness itself, however, is often not the actual *cause* or catalyst inducing attempts at *invoking* (as opposed to fulfilling) kinship obligations. Frequently pragmatic interest, rather than relatedness, is effective in this respect. The fact that non-kin, if desirable, can be made kin relatively easily is perhaps an indication of this: in Bentian society, claims are made on relatives not so much *because they are kin*; rather relatedness is invoked (or people are made kin) *because one wants or needs to make claims on them* (for some practical purposes). However, kinship ideology is also sometimes causally effective in this respect as when people visit or give food to a relative for the sake of maintaining good relations. Bentian kin interaction is thus sometimes goal-rational, sometimes value-rational, and frequently both. To the extent that it is primarily value-rational it is largely the direct result of the (causative) influence of kinship ideology. However, even when it is goal-rational, kinship often represents an authority which serves as a means to realize objectives by way of influencing the reactions of other people affected by it. As a result of how notions of relatedness are perceived and invoked in Bentian society people are significantly constrained by their kin relations, and often (although this applies to some people more than others) in a position to constrain others.

The restricted importance of cognatic kinship as an organizing principle should not, then, be taken to imply that Bentian kinship is generally unimportant: even though it does not clearly define obligations in particular contexts, kinship ideology is centrally important in Bentian society in that its use frequently results in obligations (and thus generates resources). Similarly, the fact that notions of relatedness are so inclusive should not, any more than what I have called the "pragmatic attitude toward kinship," be interpreted as a sign that Bentian kinship lacks content, that is, that it signifies nothing in particular (or potentially everything). Rather, we can speak with Fortes (1969) of its content as consisting of "the axiom of prescriptive altruism" or perhaps even borrow Schneider's (1968) characterization of American kinship as "a code for conduct enjoining diffuse, enduring solidarity" (Schneider 1984:53). Bentian kinship forms a moral code which receives a remarkable force from how it is articulated with and expressed by regularly performed social action. The meaning of kinship among the Bentian is its function *as an authority,* and it is in this capacity that it plays a central role in Bentian social life.

There is thus something quite misleading about the notion of kinship by default, in so far as it suggests that kinship ideology does not exert a *positive* influence, that is, affect through its presence instances of action and courses of events. That kinship

terminology is so frequently invoked, and that people want to interact with and marry those people whom they consider their kin, is not inconsequential, but demonstrates, on the contrary, as Douglas Miles has claimed for the Ngaju, that kinship "serves as a catalyst in social relationships" (1970:305). If also considering the fact that relatedness, as indigenous vocabulary suggests, can be based on several criteria (consanguinity, affinity, residence, friendship) rather than just on biological/genealogical kinship, then kinship, as an ideology and in the form of the concrete instances of social relations identified as kin relations, makes an even greater difference. What matters in respect to kinship terminologies is, as McKinley argues, "not how the apparently genealogical meanings get *extended out* but rather how effectively the model as a whole *draws people in*" and in that respect Bentian kinship functions admirably well (1983:360, orig. italics). As illustrated by the story of Udin, notions of relatedness and obligations toward relatives constitute sources of authority which can effectively be used to restrict the autonomy of some, and increase the social resources of other, members of Bentian society, thereby challenging notions of far-reaching individual or household autonomy postulated somewhat one-sidedly by academic Borneo observers. Bentian kinship represents a highly influential authority which is at one and the same time a vitally important personal resource (sometimes critical for survival) as well as a vehicle by which integration in Bentian society is largely achieved (although the end result of integration in this society is not equivalent to a neatly ordered series of discrete social units consisting of members recruited solely on the basis of kinship, narrowly defined). However, no authorities are absolute and this is, as borne out by this chapter, no less true regarding kinship authority, the force as well as limitations of which, in the final instance, are based on its practical constitution. But Bentians do not rely just on kinship in order to fulfil personal needs or achieve integration, other means and ideologies are employed as well, and it is to some of these that I will now turn as the next chapter begins.

4. Religious Authority: The Imperative and Impact of Ritualization

Introduction

One of my most persistent impressions from staying among the Bentian is that of a couple of *belian*s sitting at the base of the *longan,* chanting quietly, their voices tired and hoarse, to the minimal accompaniment of the hollow but dull sound of their drums, which they slap at infrequent intervals, a single, loosely synchronized blow producing a monotonous rhythm marking the progress of a *buntang* ritual. Around them, at some distance, there are other voices: children playing, men and women talking, people coming in or going out of the longhouse — "everyday life" unfolding. No one pays the *belian*s much attention, and at times, typically around noon before the midday heat becomes most oppressive, they may be alone in the house for several hours, while other people are away on their swiddens or out performing other chores.

The occasion of this impression is a common and significant occurrence in Bentian society. I spent quite some time observing it, as it makes up much of the first few days of *buntangs,* which were held frequently during my fieldwork. Even though the specific part of the ritual which the related impression concerns is unspectacular and commands little attention from ritual participants, the activity in question is regarded as essential to the ritual. I use it here to illustrate something essential about how religious authority, the subject of this chapter, is acquired by Bentians. Also, I will analyze this subject largely by way of the *buntang*. This ritual — a multiprogram and multipurpose event often lasting around a week or longer — will form the principal case material of this chapter.

Religious authority, which I define as "authority pertaining to or deriving from relations with so-called supernatural agencies," is a complex category, at least as complex as kinship authority and, of course, to no less a degree an analytical construction. It consists of various sources of authority, such as different kinds of supernatural agencies — spirits, ancestors, souls — as well as the notions, objects, and practices (i.e. rituals) associated with these agencies (God is not an agency which I will be concerned with in this chapter, however, because of the unimportance of God in Kaharingan ritual). Then there are also some authority positions associated with religious authority, that is, those of "life ritual shaman" (*belian*) and "death-ritual shaman" (*warah*). I will provide an overview of most of these agencies, notions, objects, practices and positions, although I will do so largely indirectly — *through* an analysis of their role in ritual, and in the *buntang* ritual, in particular. I have chosen to approach religious authority by way of an analysis of ritual because it is mainly through rituals that its various aspects become relevant to Bentians (as well as known by them in the first place). Doing so also attunes

well with my general approach which is to investigate authority in the context of the social practices which establish it.

Religious life for Bentians (I am here and throughout the chapter mainly talking about Kaharingan Bentians) is largely synonymous with ritual. This is the result of several factors. First, religious rituals are arranged exceptionally frequently. During my fieldwork I had the opportunity of participating in rituals almost every second night. A family typically arranges several rituals every year, including curing, harvest, and *buntang* rituals. Second, ritual actions generally seem to concern Bentians much more than religious beliefs, while outside of rituals, people generally appear to be rather secular and unspeculative. Since the Bentian engage in rituals so frequently, most of their persistent problems relating to the actions or wishes of spiritual agencies (and many of those pertaining to human actions and desires) are also eventually subjected to ritual treatment, in rituals which are often remarkably complex. "Ritual treatment," or what I henceforth, influenced by Bell (1992), will call "ritualization," is also a principal strategy of authorization in such cases when Bentians deliberately employ religious authority.[108] For this reason, which provides another motive for me to approach religious authority through ritual, I will pay special attention to the phenomenon of ritualization, particularly such ritualization which is carried out through the *buntang*. In doing so, I am interested, not only in what, and how, ritual authorizes, but also, and even more importantly, in illuminating those properties of the ritualization process which make it authoritative. Hereby, it is my intention to work toward an answer, in the Bentian context, to a fundamental question asked by Bell (1992:115): "How is it that *ritual* activities are seen or judged to be the appropriate thing to do?"

There are other Bentian rituals, some of which could perhaps merit equal consideration with the *buntang*: various curing rituals (*belian luangan, belian bawo, belian sentiu, belian bawe*), harvest rituals (*kerewaiyu*), birth rituals (*ngulas bidan*), weddings (*pelulung*), and secondary mortuary rituals (*gombok*). Curing rituals, for

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[108] Bell (1992:7) understands ritualization as "a strategic *way* [orig. emphasis] of acting which differentiates itself from other practices." Like her I also see ritualization as a special form of *action,* but I primarily use it with respect to such spatio-temporally circumscribed actions associated with formalized social gatherings led by a religious specialist (*belian* or *warah*), intended to redress or reconstitute human relations with so-called supernatural agencies in order to achieve some practical end such as curing an illness or celebrating a social relationship. This means that I principally use the word for such actions (including verbal action) which are associated with what might be called "religious rituals." I am not, in this chapter, so much interested in isolated instances of ritualized actions which occur outside religious ritual, even though much of what I will have to say applies to such actions as well. It should perhaps be noted here that some minor religious rituals, that is, rituals which address supernatural agencies, may indeed be conducted by laymen without an human audience; like other instances of ritualized action occurring outside religious rituals conducted by religious experts before a human audience, such ritual will not concern me here, however. In investigating ritualization through what I here define as religious ritual, I am particularly interested in how such rituals, as strategic actions, work authoritatively, and in what, more generally, their appeal lies.

instance, are much more common than *buntang*s. What makes the *buntang* especially interesting to me is the wealth of spiritual agencies which it attracts, as well as the relatively large number of people which it tends to draw together. In addition, the *buntang* encompasses activities which also occur in these other rituals (e.g. curing), which means that a discussion of the *buntang* will reveal a lot about other Bentian rituals, as well.

Concentration — of spirits, people, and souls — may in fact be advanced as the basic goal of *buntang*s and, to a lesser degree, of rituals in general. It is partly in order to illustrate this point that I have opened this chapter with an image of the *belian*s chanting by the *longan*. This curious object, which was long something of a mystery to me (and to some degree, still is) is the focal point of the *buntang* ritual. It marks the place where a large part of the ritual activities occur, the center around which much of the ritual paraphernalia is arranged. It also constitutes a place where spirits congregate during rituals and from which certain kinds of spirit and ancestral authority emanate. Consisting of a cone-shaped wooden structure of some four to eight poles connected at the base and leaning outwards as they reach higher, the *longan,* similar in this respect to bamboos whose stems grow out from one clump, also symbolizes (e.g. in ritual chants) concentration and a common source. So although the *belian*, during the activity described above, may be in the background with regards to the attention of the ritual participants, he is, in another respect, at the very center of what takes place. This, in turn, illustrates another fundamental aspect of Bentian religious life: Bentians are generally quite content to let the *belian*s (in ritual texts nicknamed *lalang*, "envoys") handle their dealings with religious authorities. Indicative of this, the most basic ingredient of Bentian rituals is the chants of the officiating *belian*s. A majority of the ritual activities are made up solely of these chants, part of which are unaccompanied, and part of which are accompanied by music played on drums and gongs. In the *buntang* there is an unusually large number of activities which require participation by others than the *belian*s, but these activities also involve chanting, which is perceived by Bentians as their essential part, as that which makes them effectual.

The *Buntang*: A General Description

I will begin this analysis of religious authority through ritual by providing a general description of the *buntang*, which has not been ethnographically documented previously. In particular, I will discuss the basic purposes and social context of the ritual, so as to give the reader some notion about the motives for ritualization among the Bentian. Later I will present a concrete example of the ritual, and then proceed by analyzing ritualization through this example.

*Buntang*s, called *bekeleu* among the Benuaq and the Tunjung, are said to have been in existence for as long as can be remembered. Early references include Grabowsky (1888:583-84) who witnessed a *buntang* held after a mortuary ritual among the Lawangan of present-day Central Kalimantan (Ayuh river), and Knappert (1905:619) who encountered *buntang*s among Bawo Luangans in present-day East Kalimantan (Bongan river) and South Kalimantan (Tabalong river). The *buntang* was probably practiced by all Luangans (today it is reportedly rare outside the central Luangan area), and in its general form (as well as in many details) it resembles some rituals performed by other peoples elsewhere in Borneo and beyond, for example, the *balaku untung* of the Ngaju, the *gawai* of the Iban (Masing 1997), the *ma'bua'* of the Toraja (Volkman 1985), the *salia* of the Wana (Atkinson 1989), and the *pangnae* of the Mapparundo (George 1996). Like these rituals, the *buntang* is, to use an expression employed by Atkinson to describe the *salia*, a "liturgy-centered" ritual (Atkinson 1989:14). As such, it is characterized by a relatively fixed, prescribed structure, or in Atkinson's words, an "orderly set of ritual procedures which coordinate the actions of practitioners and congregants." As is the case with the other rituals mentioned, thanksgiving and supplication addressed to spirits for the benefit of a collectivity of some kind is also a dominant feature of the *buntang*. Other prominent characteristics are the comparatively grand, numerous and expensive animal sacrifices which it involves (dedicated to the spirits, but eaten by the participants) and the relatively large number of participants which it tends to attract (largely because of the animal sacrifices, which are quite important in a society where meat and other protein sources may often be absent from people's diet for long periods).

Being a multipurpose and multiprogram ritual, however, it is somewhat difficult to state briefly what the *buntang* generally is about. Despite a high degree of structural consistency, *buntang*s are remarkably varied, both in the sense of accommodating a wide range of rather diverse activities, and with respect to the diversity of the basic purposes for which they are arranged. In addition, *buntang*s vary in terms of length and elaborateness. Perhaps the most basic criterion that Bentians use to distinguish between *buntang*s is the number of days that it ideally takes to perform them. Four, six and eight days are the standard formats. Eight-day *buntang*s involve the sacrifice of a water buffalo, in addition to some number of pigs and chickens, while in four and six-day *buntang*s, only pigs and chickens are sacrificed.

To give the reader a rough idea about the structure and contents of the *buntang,* I have included a table (Table 1) which lists the activities of a six-day *buntang*, a common format of many *buntang*s which I witnessed, including one which later will serve as my principal example of the ritual. Four-day *buntangs* are structurally identical to six-day *buntang*s; eight-day *buntang*s, which require a water buffalo sacrifice, include some additional features, although they have otherwise the same basic structure.

Table 1. The Program of a Six-Day *Buntang*

Day One
Nempuli liau (Sending Away the *Liau*)
Nyili nyolo (Sending Away Bad Spirits and Bad Luck)
Pedolui mulung (Descending of the Spirit Familiars)
Pejiak pejiau (Blessing the Ritual)
Marah mansa la longan (Reporting News by the *Longan*)
Marah mansa la dongo (Reporting News by the Patient)
Marah mansa la boa jaweng (Reporting News by the Door)
Bekawat (Curing)
Nyerah upah (Presenting Rewards to the Spirit Familiars)
Pekuli mulung (Returning the Spirit Familiars)

Day Two
Peruko Luing (Awakening *Luing*)
Nempuun teraran (Reciting *Tempuun Teraran*)
Mulai nempuun urei (Beginning *Tempuun Urei)*
Bekawat (Curing)
Nyerah upah (Presenting Rewards to the Spirit Familiars)
Pekuli mulung (Returning the Spirit Familiars)

Day Three (*Olo Nyerewe*, The Day of Hanging up the *Ibus* Stripes)
Peruko Luing (Awakening *Luing*)
Nyolung nempuun urei (Finishing *Tempuun Urei*)
Nyili nyolo (Sending Away Bad Spirits and Bad Luck)
Nyorong nyokoi (Feeding the Ancestor Skulls)
Uge utek (Fetching the Headhunt Skull)
Makan utek layau (Feeding the Headhunt Skull)
Pesengket (Receiving the Celestial *Naiyu* Spirits at the Headhunt Skull)
Nyenkoi ampun pengoreng (Fetching *Luing* Ayang from Her Abode)
Pedolui Luing (Descending *Luing* Ayang)
Betangai (Dedicating the Animal Sacrifices)
Muat tueh (Erecting the Fortune Tree)
Nyerewe (Hanging Up the *Ibus* stripes)
Jue ngopou (Naming the Ritual Decorations)
Marah mansa la longan (Reporting News by the *Longan*)
Marah mansa la dongo (Reporting News by the Patient)
Marah mansa la boa jaweng (Reporting News by the Patient)
Bekawat (Curing)
Berejuus (Soul Retrieval)
Nyerah upah (Presenting Rewards to the Spirit Familiars)
Pekuli mulung (Returning the Spirit Familiars)

Day Four (*Olo leno*, The Day in Between)
Nangko Luing (Waking and Dressing up *Luing*)
Nempuun buut piak (Reciting the *Tempuun* of Pigs and Chickens)
Bekawat (Curing)
Berejuus (Soul Retrieval)
Nyerah upah (Presenting Rewards to the Spirit Familiars)
Pekuli mulung (Returning the Spirit Familiars)

Day Five (*Kenoyeng*, The Day Before the Big Day)
Nangko Luing (Waking and Dressing *Luing*)
Nginton ngunau (Requesting the Bad to Leave)
Niti nenteng (Informing about the Approaching Climax of the Ritual)
Pedolui mulung penengkejah (Descending the Frightening Spirit Familiars)
Nengkejah (Frightening the Spirits)
Pedolui mulung selebemeng (Descending the Prohibiting Spirit Familiars)
Nyele bemeng (Issuing Prohibitions to the Spirits)
Ninek torung (Planting the *Samat* Trees)
Marah mansa la longan (Reporting News by the *Longan*)
Marah mansa la dongo (Reporting News by the Patient)
Marah mansa la boa jaweng (Reporting News by the Patient)
Bekawat (Curing)
Berejuus (Soul Retrieval)
Nyerah upah (Presenting Rewards to the Spirit Familiars)
Pekuli mulung (Returning the Spirit Familiars)

Day Six (*Olo kolak*, The Final Day)
Nangko Luing (Dressing *Luing* Ayang)
Ngeramu (Distributing Betel Nuts to the Spirits)
Nyili nyolo (Sending Away Bad Luck)
Nyorong nyokoi (Feeding the Ancestor Skulls)
Pedolui bawen payak (Descending the Spirit Familiars Responsible for Distributing the Offerings)
Ngejua ngeblaang (Distributing the Offerings)
Ngaper buut piak (Blessing the Sacrificial Animals)
Betangai (Dedicating the Sacrificial Animals)
Nempuk pali (Ascending the Pali spirits)
Rak tang (Finishing the Dedication of the Sacrificial Animals)
Pekate (Slaughtering the Sacrificial Animals)
Ngulas pusaka (Anointing the Ancestral Objects with Blood)
Makan utek layau (Feeding the Headhunt Skull)
Makan aning (Offering Cooked Food to the Clean Ones)

The Concluding Morning (*Pita penyolung*)
Bekawat (Curing)
Ngobet sepatung (Discarding the Ritual Paraphernalia Used for Curing)
Mengket blai juus (Entering the Soul House)
Nempuk blai juus sampan benawa (Ascending the Soul House and the Soul Search Ship)
Nyentuar mulung (Taking Farewell of the Spirit Familiars)
Pedolui Kerongo (Descending Kerongo)
Ngejala (Net-Catching Whatever Bad that Remains)
Nitik ketong (Playing the Jews Harp to Ascend Kerongo)
Meru (Distributing Rewards to the Participants)
Rak tang (Music Marking the End of the Ritual)

Informants reported *buntang*s had a smaller format but were more frequent in the past. It is perhaps impossible to say how often they used to be arranged, but most extended families or housegroups were probably likely, if resources allowed, to arrange at least one a year, as was the case, during 1996, in the village which constituted my fieldwork base. Outside the central Luangan area, *buntang*s seem to be generally rare today.

For brevity's sake, I will not provide a comprehensive description of the activities listed in Table 1, although I will comment on many of them as I proceed. From the point of view of the officiating *belian*s (there are usually three or four *belian*s performing a *buntang*, with one recognized as their leader), the program should ideally proceed uninterrupted from start to end, except for brief meal breaks and a few hours sleep in the middle of the night. With the exception of the first day, when the program starts in the evening, and the concluding morning, the program every day begins at the break of dawn by the *belian*s waking up *Luing* — the female spirit of rice who is their leading spirit helper — and continues until about midnight or later. The mornings and afternoons of the few first days mainly consist of the slow recitation of *tempuun*, origin stories recounting the origins of the sacrificial animals and different paraphernalia used in the ritual. This is the recitation that the *belian*s sitting by the *longan* depicted at the beginning of the chapter were performing. Like many other activities in the *buntang* (such as the waking up of *Luing* every morning), the recitation of *tempuun* forms a "preparatory activity;" it does not by itself bring about any of the perceived goals of the ritual, even though it is regarded as essential to its performance.

The recitation of *tempuun* typically attracts little attention from participants, and the *belian*s may sometimes be the only people present while it proceeds. In this respect, it contrasts with the activities performed after sunset — which on the first few nights mainly consist of curing — when the sponsoring family and their relatives tend to be assembled, and guests often continuously drop in. As the ritual proceeds, the program gets more varied and intense in both the day and the night while the number of participants and their involvement in the ritual activities increases. At the same time, the focus of the ritual activities shifts from curing to thanksgiving and supplication. The final evening, when most of the animal sacrifices are made, and cloth banners are hung up outside the ritual house to inform the spirits and people that this is occurring, the ritual culminates and the number of participants increases to its maximum — to usually between thirty and a hundred people.

For most of the duration of the ritual, participants typically spend their time chatting in small groups, not infrequently while plaiting rattan baskets or mats or playing cards. Ideally, the atmosphere is festive, but relaxed. Occasionally, some participants take part in collective ritual activities or in playing the music performed as part of these activities. Others, particularly the sponsors and their relatives, are from time to time involved in

constructing the numerous ritual paraphernalia (*ruye*) to be used in the *buntang* or in fetching the plants needed for their construction from the forest. At least twice a day, good food (including meat) is served freely to all participants. In the late evenings, those still present often doze off but typically wake up at the point when the program ends and the special delicacies used in offerings to spirits (*okan penyewaka*) are served to the human participants.

Thanksgiving, Curing, Supplication, Congregation, and Consecration

Joseph Weinstock, whose dissertation *Kaharingan and the Luangan Dayaks* (1983a) is the most extensive work on Luangan religion and society in English, classified *buntang*s as "thanksgiving rituals" (1983a:44-46), a designation which is supported by the important fact that a majority of *buntang*s are held in fulfilment of a vow (*niat*) made to the spirits on the occasion of a preceding curing ritual in hopes of thus inducing them to alleviate the patient's suffering and help him or her recover. The Bentian themselves also commonly describe the objective of *buntang*s as being to present "rewards" (*upah*) to the spirits, primarily the *belian*s' spirit helpers (*mulung*) and several categories of protecting spirits (*pengiring*) who continuously guard over people and various general conditions in nature or society. In addition a large portion of the activities carried out during *buntang*s are obviously thanksgiving in character, that is, they serve essentially to distribute some form of rewards or express gratitude to the spirits.[109]

While justified in some respects, however, a categorization of the *buntang* as a thanksgiving ritual may be misleading. Even though thanksgiving in some form is always present in *buntang*s, the ritual is never only an act of thanksgiving, and other objectives are frequently of more primary importance for holding it. As already indicated, curing is a standard feature of *buntang*s which, when arranged in fulfilment of a vow made to spirits during preceding curing rituals, tend to be held even when the patient has not yet recovered. In such cases, the curing activities of the *buntang* become centrally important, but they will be included in the ritual also if the patient has recovered, in which case they are regarded as preventative rather than restorative. *Buntang*s are, in fact, perceived as a particularly powerful means of curing, superior to ordinary curing rituals, and they are sometimes enacted primarily for this purpose, for example, when ordinary curing rituals have failed (in which case the *buntang* forms advance payment as much as an expression of gratitude) or when a curing ritual is considered hopelessly insufficient even from the start. The curing conducted during *buntang*s is basically similar to that carried out during

[109] When I talk about "rewards" to spirits here I do so in the sense of "wages" or " fees." The term which I thus translate (*upah*) essentially refers to payment for services rendered and it is notably not used in the sense of "offering" for which another term is employed (*semah*).

curing rituals: it takes the same general form and its central aim is to retrieve the patient's soul (*juus*), which spirits are believed to have abducted, and hence to restore the patient's health.

Like ordinary curing rituals, or what should perhaps more properly be called ordinary *belian*,[110] *buntang*s are also sometimes arranged to remedy conditions other than illness in the strict sense of the term. *Buntang*s can be held, for instance, after the death of a relative if the hot (*layeng*) state of listlessness (*utas*) which is associated with sorrow still persists among the survivors after the secondary mortuary ritual has been held. In the nineteenth century, if the deceased was an especially influential person, *buntang*s of this kind, which are called *buntang moas utas* ("*buntang*s expelling listlessness"), sometimes provided an occasion for slave sacrifice or headhunting, and some of the heads then taken have been kept and are "fed" as part of the program of *buntang*s today (Day Three in Table 1). To mention another example, a *buntang* is also considered to be the appropriate ritual to arrange in order to rectify marriages which are considered too close or otherwise illicit (*sumbang*), or when such marital or other sexual relations, or breach of other elementary norms of social conduct, are believed to have caused extensive collective misfortune or upset conditions in nature (i.e. caused drought, excessive rains or a solar eclipse). In such cases, the *buntang* arranged frequently takes the form of a *nalin taun*, an extended version of the *buntang* usually lasting at least sixteen days which forms the grandest and most expensive of all Bentian rituals, and which, unlike other *buntang*s, is sponsored by an entire community instead of by a single family. This ritual, whose name means "to heal the year" (the *agricultural* year), encompasses some additional activities not part of ordinary *buntang*s, most importantly the sung recitation of the origin story of the world and mankind. Like ordinary *buntang*s, the *nalin taun* can also be held for purposes of thanksgiving, for example, as a token of gratitude for a good harvest or if drought has been averted as a result of a vow made to the spirits.

[110] As there is no indigenous term corresponding to the word "curing ritual," and as the rituals to which I refer by that term (i.e. *belian luangan, belian bawo, belian sentiu, belian bawe*) are not exclusively arranged in order to cure illness (i.e. somatic disorders) but also, for instance, to treat the dangerous states following from bad dreams (*upi daat*) or house fire (*blai soya*), it is perhaps inaccurate, strictly speaking, to label them curing rituals, although I have chosen to do so here in order to more easily distinguish them from other rituals. Bentians often refer to these rituals as just "*belian*" for short, and they can be called "ordinary *belian*" (*belian pee*) in distinction to *buntang*s (which may be called *belian buntang*) and other rituals. As this indicates, the term *belian* can also be used as a generic term for "life-rituals" as opposed to "death-rituals" (i.e. mortuary ceremonies). Finally, the word *belian* is the most commonly used word for (life-ritual) shamans (who more strictly, but less commonly, are called *pemelian*), and it is mainly in that sense that I will use the word in this text.

Both thanksgiving and various forms of curing are basic purposes for arranging a *buntang*, as they are in fact also for other Bentian rituals.[111] In addition, supplication represents a third such purpose. An emphasis on thanksgiving and supplication is characteristic of the *buntang*, as also indicated by the fact that holding a *buntang* may be referred to by the phrase *beresinta beredua*, meaning something like "demonstrating devotion and making prayers." Thanksgiving activities are almost always combined with some form of appeal, and the *buntang* also includes a whole series of activities whose primary objective is supplication. Such activities, many of which require collective participation (but are always led by the *belian*), are typically not so much concerned with a particular problem of immediate concern (e.g. the patient's illness, the weather), as with the general well-being of the sponsoring family as a whole and, somewhat secondarily, of other participants. Some of these activities take the form of seeking to eliminate bad conditions (e.g. *Nengkejah,* the burning of *nateng* resins emitting sparks as part of an effort to frighten evil-minded spirits) while others (e.g. *Ninek torung*, the sowing of invisible plant counterparts of the participants with rattling bamboo dibbling sticks) form attempts to obtain various positive conditions, such as a long life, good luck, or plenty of food. What is explicitly requested in the chants accompanying these activities is typically couched in general and conventionalized terms rather than in terms of particular favors.

A most important feature of *buntang*s is the fact that, whereas the great majority of Bentian rituals are sponsored by a nuclear family, that is, a conjugal pair, the *buntang* is characteristically sponsored by a somewhat larger family entity, minimally an extended family and typically what I have called a housegroup. The housegroup collectively owns a wooden miniature ship (*sampan benawa*), used by the *belian*s for soul-search travel particularly on *buntang*s, as well as a "soul house" (*blai juus*), into which the members of the sponsoring family symbolically enter, by simultaneously placing one of their feet on its ladder, at the conclusion of the ritual. Sponsorship by the housegroup reflects the

[111] Most Bentian rituals aim in at least some respects to thank as well as cure. In the first instance, all rituals, including curing rituals only a few hours long, involve some distribution of rewards (*nyerah upah*) to those spirits who have contributed to their enactment (minimally, a bowl of uncooked rice is dedicated to the *belian*'s spirit familiars). More particularly, secondary mortuary rituals are conceived of as rituals through which the souls of the dead are "cured" (*nalin*), and certain dangers for the living thus eliminated — at the same time as they are essentially thanksgiving in character: acts of reciprocation dedicated to the dead by living descendants repaying what the dead did for them. At weddings the shaman cures the bridal couple — for the future so to speak, so that they "should not fight, not separate, not contribute unequally to their respective families." Curing *per se* may perhaps be regarded as absent from harvest rituals — which are perceived primarily as thanksgiving rituals dedicated to all those agencies who have enabled the harvest to occur (including, most importantly, the spirit of rice, *Luing*) — although activities aimed at supplication constitute, as they do in the *buntang*, a central element in the ritual. Such activities are also part of the birth rituals (held four or eight days after the birth of a child) which are enacted primarily in order to thank the midwife and her spiritual helpers (especially the earth spirits, Tonoi).

greater expenditures of *buntang*s as compared with other rituals, but also shows the fact that the *buntang* is essentially perceived as a kind of family ritual, another expression of which is the fact that it is (together with the *nalin taun*) the only ritual in which the *longan* is used; holding a *buntang* may, in fact, be referred to metonymically as *nerek longan,* "to erect the *longan.*"[112] Together with mortuary rituals, the *buntang* also forms the principal occasion for kin congregation in Kaharingan communities, and achieving kin unity is commonly an explicit or implicit motive to arrange a *buntang*. A generally plentiful participation is also an acknowledged goal of the ritual, serving to establish good relations between the sponsors and other families, and enhance the status of the sponsors.

Unity is sought not only between the members of the sponsoring family, and between them and their kin and neighbors, but also with their dead relatives and the ancestors in general. In fact, *buntang*s are concerned so much with various categories of ancestors that an ancestral orientation can be seen as an important characteristic of the ritual. In the first place, *buntang*s include several thanksgiving and supplicatory activities addressed to the ancestors. An example is *Ngulas pusaka*, the anointment of sacrificial blood on the ancestor skulls and the other ancestral objects, with the double intention (expressed in the accompanying chants) of conveying gratitude toward them as well as receiving their blessings. In the second place, *buntang*s are also concerned with what we could call the negative aspects of the ancestors. For example, *buntang*s begin by sending away the body souls (*liau*) of the ancestors, who are believed to be capable of otherwise sabotaging the ritual work. And in connection with the curing activities conducted during *buntang*s, a search for the souls of the patient and other participants is always carried out by the *belian*s at the abodes of the body and head souls of dead relatives, who, like other spirits, are believed to sometimes lure away the souls of the living from their bodies (dreams about dead relatives are often interpreted to mean precisely this).

In addition to these reasons to hold *buntang*s that pertain to spirits, ancestral or other, there are special reasons pertaining to the living. I will call these "social motives," which are only rarely mentioned in the chants of the rituals. Typically, a *buntang* has at least some social motives, along with several spirit-related ones. Some of these social motives, such as kin congregation, are always relevant, whereas others, which may be regarded as being of special types, specifically pertain to a particular social situation. All the social motives, including kin congregation, relate to some sort of consecration, either of relations between people, or between people and nonhuman entities, or of statuses.

As an example of a more special social motive, a *buntang* may be held to consecrate a new house (especially if the house in question is considered to be a *lou*, an extended

[112] The *longan* is, as I have argued above, a symbol of the housegroup and the place of storage of the ancestor skulls and other objects associated with the housegroup's ancestral representatives, a fact making the expression *nerek longan* especially appropriate as a designation for a family ritual.

family house, rather than just an ordinary house, *blai*, in which case a smaller "curing" ritual would usually be sufficient). Similarly, a *buntang* can be arranged when a family leaves one community for another, to signal the value of their relationship to relatives and co-villagers left behind. *Buntang*s can also be held to inaugurate the installation of a new village head or the opening up of a previously uncultivated tract of land for cultivation, or to bless marital unions, as an extension of the wedding ceremony. In addition, there is a special form of *buntang* called *buntang nuak*, which specifically addresses social concerns. During this ritual, the sponsoring family, or sponsoring community (the *buntang* in this case is often a *nalin taun*), invites and offers gifts to another family or community, which is expected to counter (*bales*) the invitation and the gifts on some later occasion.

The fact that *buntang*s are most often arranged during the first few months following the harvest when there is plenty of rice to serve to participants, and little work on the swiddens to keep them busy, shows that social considerations are never entirely absent from *buntang*s. In years when there has been an especially bountiful harvest, more *buntang*s are held than in other years, and a family who has some motive to arrange one will then be under greater pressure to do so than at other times.[113] There are also special expectations placed on the families of distinguished *manti*, and on families who own many water buffaloes, to arrange a *buntang* at least occasionally, regardless of whether they might have any motives to do so (however, the frequency of curing rituals and the fluidity of social constellations in Bentian society ensures that there is practically always some reason for a family to arrange one). In the past, and to some degree still today, *buntang*s played an important role in promoting local leadership, as indicated by the fact that the *nalin taun* ritual evolved in the mid-nineteenth century in connection with the development of community-wide leadership.

As we have seen, a double concern with the social and the so-called supernatural world (which in Bentian conceptions are not separated) is an intrinsic feature of the *buntang*. The ritual takes place in, and also affects various conditions in, both of these realms. What the *buntang* basically comes down to is maintaining good relations: good relations with agencies in both of these realms — spirits, ancestors, relatives and neighbors. By arranging a *buntang*, one in effect gives something — e.g. food, respect, rewards or forgiveness — to every one of them. But at the same time, one also asks for something — health, harvests, help, or honor — which one hopes to achieve by invoking

[113] Possibly because of this indirect association with harvests, Weinstock describes the *buntang* as a "thanksgiving ritual ... traditionally held only after an exceptionally abundant harvest" (1983a:45). While it may have been the case that expressing thanks for harvests at some point in time had been the principal purpose to hold *buntang*s in some Luangan areas where Weinstock did fieldwork, the motives and objectives of the ritual have usually been more complex among Luangans, as they certainly have among the Bentian.

the religious authorities (the spirits and the *belians*), and which provides a major incentive for giving the *buntang* in the first place.

Ma Mar's Buntang

Since I am investigating religious authority through the ritualization process, I will introduce a concrete example of the ritual. Using material from this example (e.g. *belian*'s chants), I will then analyze some of the central implications of ritualization, and in that connection discuss the various aspects of religious authority relevant to the process. The example to be presented consists of a six day *buntang* held in late December, 1996, in the village of Temiang. It focuses on Ma Mar, the patient (*dongo*) at the ritual, a man in his mid or late forties at the time of my fieldwork, who was the first of the two husbands of Nen Pare, the woman whom Udin was accused of making ill by sorcery (see Fig. 1 for an illustration of some of the kinship relations of the people discussed in this example).

The ritual in question, which I will henceforth refer to as "Ma Mar's *buntang*," was allegedly arranged primarily to deal with what could from a Western viewpoint be characterized as a rather mild illness: a flu (*semek*). However, the illness was also associated with listlessness (*utas*), including an unwillingness to work. This indicated that the weakness experienced by Ma Mar was an expression of soul loss or loss of soul strength, more particularly, one which could be related to the death of Nen Pare six months earlier; Ma Mar had mourned her loss for several months, his head shaved (*tolong*) in accordance with the customary practice of expressing sorrow and for that length of time making a notably cheerless appearance. (Nen Pare had died of an uterine tumour which had kept her in bed, and Ma Mar stayed by her side for over a year before her death.)

Now, however, Ma Mar had moved in with a new woman, Nen Pore, his dead brother Ma Lemake's former wife, and because of this affair, suspicions of jealousy (*kewoyu*) on the part of Nen Pare constituted another potential cause of soul loss. An additional factor indicating soul loss was the fact that Ma Mar had recently fallen while wandering in the forest (as many other Southeast Asians, Bentians believe that soul loss may result from falls or fright; it is thought that the soul can leave the body as a result of the shock). Finally, various spirits associated with particular forest areas that Ma Mar routinely traversed (mainly in the vicinity of the swidden of his adoptive son Mudai whom he had periodically been helping out, having been prevented by Nen Pare's illness from making a swidden of his own that year) were also suspected of having stolen (*dako*) his soul.

Apart from an attempt to retrieve Ma Mar's soul, some quite different motives for arranging the *buntang* were also suggested. It was said that it was arranged because a marriage ceremony for Ma Mar and Nen Pore had not yet been held. The ritual thus

aimed to consecrate their as yet illicit relationship, as well as bless Ma Mar's integration into his new family. Ma Mar had moved into Nen Pore's house, whose head was Nen Pore's elderly father Kakah Unsir. Kakah Unsir's poor eyesight, body aches and general feebleness were also treated during the curing portions of this *buntang*. In fact, the ritual was jointly sponsored by Ma Mar and the old members of Kakah Unsir's house. Apart from reflecting concerns about Ma Mar's relation to his new family, it also reflected concerns regarding the relationship of the latter as a whole in relation to the rest of the village. It intended to demonstrate, for the sponsors as well as for the rest of the village, the unity of the inhabitants of its two downrivermost houses (Ma Mar's and Kakah Unsir's), who already were connected by numerous close intermarriages, and who had become somewhat detached from the rest of the village.[114] Despite being quite a small *buntang*, attracting a little over forty people in all (38 on the concluding evening), the ritual may also be said to have made a statement regarding the social viability of the sponsors which was particularly motivated by the fact that some time had passed since these people last had arranged a *buntang,* while all the other housegroups in the village had held one within the last year. Finally, even though not providing the decisive impetus to hold the ritual, arranging it was motivated because it created an opportunity to display the *belian* skills and authority of three individuals associated with the housegroup: Nen Pare's sister Nen Bujok's husband Ma Putup (the eccentric *belian* who gave the wedding speech of the three authorities), Nen Pore's younger brother Ma Kerudot, and Ma Mar's former co-husband Ma Sarakang.

Ma Mar's *buntang*, then, had many different issues on its agenda. For Ma Mar and his new family, holding a ritual obviously meant much more than an attempt at curing Ma

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[114] Before Ma Mar moved in, Kakah Unsir's "longhouse" (*lou*) was inhabited by Kakah Unsir himself and his second wife Tak Unsir, Nen Pore, Nen Pore's newly-wed daughter Tiar and her husband Kadir, and from time to time also by Nen Pore's brothers Ma Unsir and Ma Kerudot (the latter then accompanied by wife and small children), as well as by Ma Unsir's son Unsir (with wife and children), all of whom usually stayed in their respective swidden houses. Before his death, Ma Delidi, another brother of Nen Pore, had also been living there. Ma Mar's somewhat smaller village house, now empty, had before the death of Nen Pare been the home of himself, Nen Pare and Ma Sarakang (Ma Mar's "co-husband"), as well as of Nen Pare's sister Nen Bujok and her husband Ma Putup (who now moved into a small, single-family house adjacent to Kahah Unsir's *lou*). Earlier, Ma Mar's older brother Ma Lemake, who died two years before Nen Pare, had also lived in Ma Mar's house. Considering, as villagers sometimes did at the time of my fieldwork, the individuals associated with the two houses as forming an entity apart from the rest of the village, the following marriages can be used to exemplify their internal connectedness. Nen Pore had as already mentioned been married to Ma Mar's brother Ma Lemake prior to his death. Nen Pare had also once been married to Ma Lemake (i.e. before he married Nen Pore) while Nen Pore in her first marriage had been married to Ma Mar's co-husband Ma Sarakang with whom she had begot her daughter Tiar (thus Nen Pare and Nen Pore had three times, in different order, and at different times, been married to the same three husbands: Ma Lemake, Ma Mar and Ma Sarakang). Nen Bujok, Nen Pare's sister, had in her turn before her present marriage with Ma Putup been married first to Nen Pore's younger brother Ma Delidi, and then, after his death, to Nen Pore's older brother, Ma Unsir, whom she had divorced. See Fig. 1 for an illustration of some of these marriages.

Mar's flu, and the ritual did clearly not represent — even though thanksgiving was part of its program — a straightforward attempt to fulfill any vows made during preceding curing rituals. Various social concerns, of Ma Mar as well as of the (as yet unofficial) affinal members of his new family, were relevant, just as the propriation of ancestral spirits and a diverse assortment of other spirits was. As with *buntang*s in general, maintaining or recreating good relations with various agencies formed the perhaps most general objective of the ritual.

Soul Loss and Retrieval

By a closer look at some selected aspects of Ma Mar's *buntang,* I will try to illuminate the workings of the different components of Bentian religious authority and suggest some reasons why ritualization is authoritative. I will first consider the issue of soul loss and soul retrieval which is a matter whose importance in Bentian culture and society can hardly be overestimated (curing rituals being held almost every night in Kaharingan communities). As the plurality of theories for the soul loss of Ma Mar indicates, soul loss, and consequently soul retrieval, are typically very complex affairs. The association of soul loss with illness and other unfavorable states points to the urgency which the issue commonly has in everyday life.

In order to facilitate a deeper understanding of soul loss and retrieval, an introductory discussion of Bentian notions of the soul, as well as of ancestral souls, is necessary. Bentians believe that all living people have a *juus* which is what I have here glossed as "soul" (animals, and occasionally plants,[115] are also said to have a *juus*, although Bentians are not very clear or articulate about this; inanimate things, on the other hand, do not have a *juus* and are not seen as sentient, even though some objects, e.g. old ceramic jars, are sometimes associated with spirits).[116] The *juus* is, under normal conditions, lodged somewhere in the body. However, it may leave the body during illness as a result of being intentionally stolen by spirits (or mistaken by them for one of their game animals) or, as

[115] Rice, the economically and culturally most important plant of the Bentian, is actually not regarded as having a *juus*, but instead, to be animated by *Luing*, the spirit of rice. Other plants are also sometimes said to be animated by *luing* (e.g. in the chants of harvest rituals), although not by *Luing* of rice but by *luing* of their own kind.

[116] What I here refer to as soul closely resembles what other scholars studying other Southeast Asian peoples also have glossed as soul. However, Robert Harrison's (1979:61) use of the possibly somewhat more neutral term "spirit" for what appears to be the same entity among the Ranau Dusun of Sabah would be no less appropriate in the Bentian case. This is to say that I use the word "soul" in a very unspecific way, for a supernatural agency associated with the body of living persons, while I reserve the word "spirit" for other supernatural agencies (the only exception being the ancestors, regarding whom I use both words, as in "ancestral spirits" and "souls of the dead"). This usage coincides with Endicott's (1970) who regard souls as bound and spirits as unbound spirit agencies.

hypothesized in Ma Mar's case, as a reaction to fright or shock. The *juus* is also believed to temporarily leave the body during dreams, which are said to represent its nightly wanderings.

Bentians have no clear conception of what the *juus* looks like. Like its Wana equivalent (Atkinson 1989:108), it may be said to stand in a metaphoric relationship to its owner, yet it stands also in a metonymic relation to him as a potentially detachable part of his body. Even though it represents him, it is usually not, in contrast to the Wana or the Iban (see Sather 2001:51-58), regarded as a small replica of him (even though the use of the soul house, entered by the soul at the conclusion of the *buntang*, could seem to indicate the contrary). As among other Southeast Asians (e.g. see Errington 1989:53; Forth 1992; Rousseau 1998:110), the *belian* summons the *juus* by an articulation resembling the sound that locals make to summon their chickens. The *belian* frequently also pretends to grasp the *juus*, holding an invisible object between his thumb and forefinger, and sometimes, at the conclusion of the soul search, a small, round object is provided to represent it. After catching it, before returning it to the patient's body through an entrance on the top of the head (*kerepuru*, located slightly to the back of the fontanel), the *belian* usually puts the *juus* for temporary storage in a small tin — today most often a plastic tiger balm jar, formerly a brass betel container — which is filled with "soul oil" (*olau juus*), coconut oil containing eight carefully selected grains of rice (eight being an auspicious number, and rice symbolizing, among other things, humanity).

The *juus* is what we might term the life-force of people. When people die their *juus* also ceases to exist and, conversely, if the *juus* would permanently leave the body, death would result. Non-permanent or partial soul loss, on the other hand, is associated with illness (*roten*). More precisely, illness is said to be the result of — or described as a state of — either soul weakness or (temporary) soul loss. Illnesses do, of course, have additional attributes, for instance, the various bodily symptoms associated with them. In *belian*s' chants, the illness is commonly described as a pole (*ori*), and it may also be conceived of as sharp or pointed objects capable of entering the body. Becoming ill does in fact imply an intrusion into the body of something foreign to it, as indicated by the standard curing practice of *nyelolo*, whereby the *belian* uses a banana leaf whisk (*serumet*) to wipe the body clean of illness.

Whatever other attributes that illnesses have, however, the dominant imagery in which they, as well as various other afflictions, are conceptualized by Bentians is that of soul loss, or alternatively soul weakness, particularly in rituals. Holding a curing or *buntang* ritual therefore amounts to a translation and deduction of some particular problem or (as the case frequently may be) problems into that imagery. As an indication of the pervasiveness of the imagery of souls, soul weakness (*lome juus*) is often seen as a cause of — or at least a precondition of — soul loss. A weak soul (which is more characteristic of children as opposed to adults, women as opposed to men, ordinary

people as opposed to the *belian*s and the *manti*) is more prone to capture by spirits or loss through fright than a strong one. For this reason, people with weak souls should avoid certain experiences which people with stronger souls can endure better (e.g. watching people or animals die, wandering in the forest where spirits are abundant, contacting powerful spirits). However, soul weakness is not an inherent quality but rather the result of certain experiences. Soul hardness (*tokeng juus*) can be achieved by gradual exposure to those conditions which are dangerous for the soul, or by ritual procedures involving the use of iron or by receiving ritual payment, or such extra-ritual means as secluded meditation (*betapa*).

Nevertheless, having a strong soul is clearly advantageous and it entails having authority as well. Soul strength is commensurate with having authority. Someone believed to have a weak soul would not command much respect or be listened to in important matters. People who command respect, on the other hand, are said to have strong souls. Thus the condition of one's soul clearly reflects more than health. In fact, it may indicate social standing, psychological integrity and moral dignity, too. The discourse on *juus* among the Bentian is therefore very much a discourse on subjectivity — and sociality. Losing soul is not only about losing some unreal and intangible body aspect, but also a metaphorically charged event communicating something about the person affected, and about his or her social relationships.[117]

The dead, in contrast to the living, do not have a *juus*. However, dying does not mean that one ceases to exist altogether. On the contrary, death means that a head soul (*kelelungan*), associated with the deceased's skull, and a body soul (*liau*), associated with the deceased's bones, come into being (Weinstock [1987:79-80], describes this process

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[117] I do not, it may be noted, go quite as far as Lévi-Strauss here. I do not claim that the *juus* is an "empty signifier," a "symbol in its pure state," "itself devoid of meaning and thus susceptible of receiving any meaning at all," as he claimed the quite similar Polynesian concepts of *hau* and *mana* are (Lévi-Strauss 1987b:55,63-64). Even though I recognize that the conditions of the *juus* may signify moral states, etc. — just as *hau* may serve to designate "profit" among the Maori (Sahlins 1972:160-61) — I do not deny the existence of indigenous notions of a more thing-like, less abstract signified (i.e. a "soul"). However, the concept is, to an important extent, used to describe certain moral, psychological and social states of persons, just as *naiyu*, a Bentian word designating a particular category of spirits, is used to describe "potency," or a potent quality of certain things or persons (and some Bentian "spirit familiars" do not seem to refer to any concrete spirit beings at all but rather to qualities that it is desirable for the *belian* to have). Keesing (1984) has argued that scholarly understandings of *mana* in Oceanic languages as representing "an invisible spiritual substance or medium" are generally mistaken and at odds with indigenous usage in which the word and its cognates usually represent a stative verb, or, in those cases when it represents a noun , "an abstract verbal noun denoting the state or quality of mana-ness" (1984:138). However, he notes that, in some places, *mana* also became used as a substantive and a "metaphysics of *mana*" developed. Interestingly, he argues that the verbal and abstract usages of the term were historically anterior even in these cases, and that "the substantive" notion developed only under particular circumstances, more precisely in connection with the emergence of political hierarchy and a class of theologians (1984:152). The same preconditions may, it seems to me, have been instrumental also in southern Borneo in the development of a more elaborate and rationalized cosmology among the Ngaju as compared to the other Barito group Dayaks.

as the bifurcation of the *juus* into *liau* and *kelelungan*).[118] *Liau* and *kelelungan* should properly reside in their respective abodes on Mount Lumut (a mountain in the mythologically important upper Teweh area a few days walk from the Bentian area) and Tenangkai (a location in the heavens) although they may sometimes linger around the graveyard or their former homes, particularly if a secondary mortuary ritual (*gombok*) has not yet been held for them. In the secondary mortuary ritual, or *gombok*, the death ritual shamans (*warah*) escort both the deceased's *liau* and *kelelungan*, assisted by the *liau* and *kelelungan* of the deceased's previously dead relatives, to their proper afterworldly abodes. However, even after the *gombok* has been held, *liau* and *kelelungan* may sometimes visit their living relatives in order to ask for food or other services, and then, so as to express their desires and have their demands met, abduct their relatives' *juus*. Both *liau* and *kelelungan* have this malevolent aspect, even though *kelelungan* is referred to as good or clean in distinction to *liau*, for the principal reason that *kelelungan*, unlike *liau*, can become a protecting spirit.[119] This occurs in instances when and if (only a selected few undergo this procedure) the skull of the deceased, during an especially elaborate mortuary ritual (*gombok mpe selimat*) involving exhumation of the bones, is "brought into the house" to be stored by the *longan* as an "ancestor skull" (*utek tuha longan*, lit. "elder's skull of the longan").

In contrast to the *juus* whose physical appearance to Bentians is obscure, *liau* and *kelelungan* are described as resembling people. They are said to live in their abodes on Mount Lumut and Tenangkai much like ordinary, living people, inhabiting villages and houses whose this worldly representations are the sarcophagi (*temla, keriring*) erected for

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[118] Contrasting Weinstock's thesis, there are some indications that the *juus* becomes the *kelelungan* while the *liau* is the replacement of something else, more precisely, some ill-defined "bodily vital principle." These indications include the facts that the *kelelungan*, unlike the *liau*, may be addressed as *juus kelelungan*, that the *juus* is returned to the body through the head, and that it is the head or skull which is said to become the *kelelungan*, while the body or bones are said to become the *liau*.

[119] Peter Metcalf (1982), following Hertz 1969[1907], postulates a metaphoric relationship between the condition of the soul and the condition of the body. When the body decomposes, the soul is miserable and malevolent, but when this process finally ends and the bones are dry the soul is freed, may enter the land of the dead, and becomes a beneficent spirit. (He also notes that among the Berawan and the Ngaju, and perhaps more generally, spirits of the upperworld represent or originate as such beneficent ancestral spirits, a statement which holds true for a limited number of Bentian upperworld spirits as well.) The Bentian material — which is particularly interesting because of the twin existence of an earthly, coarse and basically malevolent ancestral spirit, and a heavenly, refined and predominantly (although not exclusively) good one — does not fit this neat scheme very well even though it displays a basic resemblance to it. As among the Berawan, newly dead ancestors tend to be malevolent whereas long dead ones tend to be beneficent (and often deified). However, the state of the body is not directly instrumental with respect to the malevolency or goodness/pureness of Bentian ancestors which is determined much more (although far from guaranteed) by the arrangement of the obligatory secondary mortuary ritual (which may occur long before actual decomposition of the body, and which does only rarely involve exhumation) or other acts by the living demonstrating respect for the ancestors. Furthermore, the *liau* remain basically coarse and malevolent with the passing of time while the *kelelungan* may only occasionally turn malevolent.

them on *gombok*s, and rearing the same animals which were sacrificed in their honor during these rituals (water buffaloes, pigs, chickens). Like spirits, however, whom they resemble in many aspects, they are regarded as *gaib* (invisible, mystical). This means that one cannot really be sure what they look like and, perhaps more significantly, where they are at any given moment, or what they are up to. Like spirits, they should be treated a little as if continually present; care has to be taken so that they receive respect and do not get hurt. A principal reason for soul capture by ancestral or other spirits is, in fact, misbehavior on the part of the person attacked.

Even if one has done nothing wrong, however, ancestral spirits may still want to capture one's soul, simply, as Bentians say, "because they long for company." As among other Dayaks practicing secondary burial, jealousy over the fact that their relatives remain alive while they are dead makes the recently dead dangerous (cf. Metcalf 1982:103-104). In Ma Mar's case, the death of his wife Nen Pare at a young age provided a special reason for him to expect envy from the dead, particularly as the "heat" (*layeng*) felt by him following her death had persisted after the arrangement of the secondary mortuary ritual for her, and he had now become ill in connection with moving in with Nen Pore. However, it was not only Nen Pare who was addressed in the capacity of having captured Ma Mar's soul at "his" *buntang*, his and her other relatives were also simultanously mentioned (although significantly, Nen Pare was mentioned first). According to the leading *belian,* Ma Putup, the names of these dead relatives were suggested to him by different members of Kakah Unsir's family. There may have been particular reasons why some of them were included (e.g. the inclusion of Ma Mar's first late wife Nen Mar was probably motivated by similar motives that motivated the inclusion of Nen Pare), but rather than specific motives providing the reason for the inclusion of each of them, some were probably picked primarily in order to represent an appropriate sampling of the *liau* as a totality (which are always visited on *buntang*s in the search for souls, regardless of whatever additional reasons *buntangs* are held).

Searching for Souls from the Liau

In order to illustrate my discussion about soul loss and soul retrieval, I shall present a *belian*'s chant from Ma Mar's *buntang*. This chant was given on the evening of the ritual's fourth day by its leading *belian,* Ma Putup and it describes his attempt to retrieve Ma Mar's soul from the *liau* (the "body soul of the dead"). A more or less identical chant, with the same structure and identical wording, but inapplicable because of the different addressee, formed part of Ma Putup's previously conducted attempt at returning souls from the *kelelungan* (the "head soul of the dead") while the chants which he produced when he tried to retrieve souls from various non-ancestral spirits on the two following

evenings were also basically similar. Hence, the chant gives a fairly good general picture of the chants used by *belian*s to retrieve souls from spirits.

Because it describes, in poetic form, what is believed to take place invisibly (or rather, what is desired to take place), the chant, like others of its kind, quite neatly delineates the procedure whereby souls are retrieved from spirits. Although wordings always vary with the officiating *belian* (and may even vary with the same *belian* on different occasions), the structure of this procedure is fairly invariant, consisting basically of three phases which are readily separable in the text presented here. Bentians refer to these phases as "paying respect" (*besemah*), "purchasing the soul" (*sentous*), and "searching for the soul" (*berejuus*). The last stage includes "snatching the soul" (*nakep juus*) which is sometimes talked about as if it were a phase of its own. In a way, even though these phases are always carried out in the mentioned sequence and appear to work according to a cumulative logic, with the previous stage enabling the next, they are really only loosely connected (why would it otherwise be necessary to search for the soul after one had already bought it?), and each stage is best seen as an alternative strategy employed to achieve the goal at hand. "Paying respect," which basically comes down to a demonstrably submissive presentation of offerings, and "purchasing the soul" correspond to principal forms of interaction (tribute and trade) which the Bentian have had with outsiders, and are for that reason seen as appropriate procedures with which to approach spirits as well.

Before the *belian*s can carry out this three-fold soul retrieval attempt, however, they first have to establish contact with the spirits, and in order to do so they, or their *juus* (or sometimes, only their spirit familiars) have to travel (invisibly) to the places where the spirits reside. In the case of the particular soul search recounted here, the place visited was Pengular, a location by the Mea river beneath Mount Lumut where *liau* stops to rest and chew betel while on its guided journey to the mountain at the conclusion of the secondary mortuary ritual (hence the reference in the chant to "the stone stained with betel," a stone at Pengular on which *liau* is believed to sit while resting). Since it is only the *warah* (death shamans) who may ascend Mount Lumut, because of the danger involved in such close association with death, the *belian*s' attempt at soul retrieval from the *liau* has to take place at Pengular.[120]

The chant begins by invoking the *liau* (lines 2-4), referring to their characteristics of showing themselves in dreams or daydreams (lines 1-2) or by mediation of certain birds (lines 3-4). It then raises the question (lines 5-14) of why the patient suffers from his affliction, and describes his condition in conventionalized, metaphorical terms (e.g. "as

[120] Interestingly, *belian*s may actually conduct the attempt at soul retrieval from the *liau* a little closer to Mount Lumut (in a dark forest grove called Kerenem) in case a water buffalo is sacrificed (i.e. not, as on Ma Mar's *buntang*, only pigs and chickens). The logic here is that a greater sacrifice reduces the danger associated with the *liau* (which is essentially the danger of death).

if marked by soot, as if rearing a dying chicken"). Lines 15-26 continue by suggesting an explanation to the previous question: the *liau* are hungry — hunger here metonymically stands for any (unspecified) want that they might have — and express this by making the patient ill.[121] Lines 27-30 then explain that this is the reason that food (and drink) is offered to the *liau* while lines 31-33 indicate the sincere and complete manner in which the offerings are delivered ("the whole person, the entire body is holding out wine, presenting beverages..."). Lines 34-36 in their turn describe, perhaps somewhat confusingly, the location where the offerings are to be received as being Mount Lumut, even though the *belian*s' invisible aspect travels only as far as Pengular (and their visible aspect conducts the ritual in Kakah Unsir's house in Temiang), while lines 39-41 entreat the *liau*, here likened to hungry fish and crabs, to receive them. Describing the *liau* in this imagery has the effect of concretely evoking the reception of the offerings and suggesting the desired manner (quick, resolute) of this reception. The same is true regarding the abbreviated count to ten in line 37 ("one-two-three-four-nine-ten") which *belian*s told me represents or hastens the process whereby the offerings reach their recipients. The semantically meaningless exclamation "o-lo-lo-loo" in line 38 signals the end of phase one, "paying respect," and the start of phase two, "purchasing the soul," as does the same sound with respect to transitions between other phases later.

Lines 42-84 describe the so-called purchase of the soul and particularly the presentation, in a spirit house specifically made for the *liau* (Bentians make special spirit houses, usually about the size of a shoe box, for most kinds of spirits), of two named bamboo figurines (one male, one female), given in exchange for Ma Mar's soul and those of his relatives. The lines also suggest various work tasks which these figurines, according to gender, can perform for the benefit of the *liau* at their abode. Along with these named figurines, the *liau* also receive a few rice paste figurines (another kind of exchange object representing the patient and his relatives: line 49) as well as a live chick representing a human slave to be sacrificed by the *liau* at their *buntang*s (line 50; resembling the living, the *liau* supposedly hold *buntang*s of their own in their realm). Lines 79-80 describe the patient and his relatives in botanical metaphors as trees.

Lines 85-97 describe some of the *belian*'s spirit familiars and the process whereby they search for souls. Rather than concrete, particular spirit familiars, the spirit familiars named here represent properties which the spirit familiars should have (e.g. nimbleness, good sight) in order to discover or snatch souls (why it is appropriate that one of them is blind could not be elucidated by Ma Putup, who helped me with the transcription and interpretation of the chant). In accordance with the same logic, "the dead *belian*s" (most

[121] That hunger represents the unspecified reason why the *liau* would want to capture the soul is yet another expression of the importance of food as a social mediator among the Bentian. It can also be seen to indicate the importance of the omission to fulfill one's ritual obligations (which very much come down to giving food) as a motive for soul theft by spirits.

spirit familiars belong in this category) are here likened to birds. Lines 98-100 refer to Pengular, mentioning, in addition to the stone stained with betel, other characteristics of the place such as pebbles in the water and wild rambutans, *siwo*, which grow on the banks. Lines 105-108 describe the spirit familiars in zoological terms, as macaques and hawks this time, and their efforts to catch the souls as involving fighting, which macaques and hawks eagerly do/have special capacities for. Lines 110-115 describe what the spirit familiars should look for, that is, the souls, here likened to pearls and other small round objects, while the count in line 116 prefigures how they snatch them.

Lines 118-171 continue the description of the snatching of souls, including, as said, those of Ma Mar's relatives (mentioned by name) and those of the *belian*s and their ritual assistants[122] (who because of their effort to catch the souls are themselves subjected to danger), as well as those of other villagers, and even those of "us people inhabiting the earth." Lines 138-39 refer to the previously mentioned "soul tin" in which the returned souls are temporarily stored. Lines 144-50 identify by name the particular *liau* from whom the soul is snatched. Lines 153-56 liken the souls to fruits and plants (which should not be allowed to become dispersed or omitted when collected), while lines 170-71, finally, liken them to wild boar and deer, which should follow the tracks of their likes, that is, return home.

Berejuus la Liau be Pengular **(Retrieving Souls from the *Liau* at Pengular)**

1 *liau* who may be seen in dreams at night
2 *liau* who can be glimpsed at noon
3 you *liau* of the *tatit* bird wailing
4 you *liau* of the *juru* bird burring
5 how does it come?
6 that the person of Ma Mar
7 is having dreams at night
8 is seeing things in the day
9 as if marked with soot
10 as if bound up by rattan
11 that he's rearing a dying chicken[123]

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[122] In curing rituals and *buntang*s, the *belian*s have female ritual assistants (*penyempatung*) who help them prepare and physically move around offerings while the ritual is in progress. In some chants they also sing along with the *belian* and at certain points they recite news to the spirits (see Table 1). Apart from the *penyempatung*, certain persons, typically males, are assigned to serve as *pengeruye,* collectors and constructors of the ritual paraphernalia (*ruye*) which is made anew (from forest materials) for every ritual.

[123] This line, like the two previous ones, metaphorically describes the condition of being ill.

12 a tame pigeon with slack wings[124]
13 thrust by the pole of sickness
14 stung by piercing maladies
15 we're afraid you evil spirits protecting *liau*[125]
16 you satans watching over them
17 are notifying us of empty stomachs
18 are complaining over tired sinews
19 we're afraid you evil spirits protecting *liau*
20 you satans watching over them
21 [but] first and foremost[126]
22 you *liau* of the dead
23 you who can be seen in dreams
24 you who can be glimpsed at noon
25 we're afraid that you're asking for food
26 afraid that you're asking for edibles
27 that is the reason
28 we're bringing you
29 offerings this evening
30 for you to receive
31 the whole person, the entire body
32 is holding out wine, presenting beverages
33 handing over drinks, offering food
34 even though this presentation is enacted here
35 it takes place on the top of Mount Lumut
36 in the village of Mount Peyuyan[127]
37 one-two-three-four-nine-ten-receive!
38 o-lo-lo-loo
39 receive offerings
40 clench hungry crabs
41 bite fish of deep forests
42 you *liau* of the dead
43 there is one thing more
44 we're offering you a house of kelewono wood

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[124] This doubly metaphorical line again refers to the patient's condition of being ill as well as to the dying chicken in the previous line.

[125] Resembling living people, the *liau* are believed to have protecting spirits who are here addressed instead of the *liau* directly, on whose behalf they are assumed to act.

[126] This expression ("first and foremost") might seem somewhat inappropriate here. It is clearly understandable, though: Ma Putup addresses the *liau* first and foremost in contrast to their protecting spirits addressed in the previous couple of lines. As a translation of the original expression (*tempue punsu ure*), the phrase "first and foremost" is, we may note, very poor. It entirely misses the local and metaphorical character of the original which consists of a word pair of which *tempue*, "boat's front," forms the first part, and *punsu ure*, "young termite nest," the second.

[127] Mount Lumut and Peyuyan are twin peaks seen as one mountain at a distance. The primary purpose of line 36 is to create an expression parallel to the previous line.

a repository of the *tewok* tree[128]
containing the beautiful noblewoman Rinsum
and mister Lalung Runsom[129]
containing food offerings
as well as rice paste figurines
here is a servant for a festive ritual[130]
first among our precious gifts
foremost among the offerings given in exchange
there is a substitute for the women[131]
exchanged for the maidens
she will pound white rice
go and get *boloi* leaves[132]
scoop the large river prawns
screen *wayuk* and *walur* fish
work on the wide ricefields
enter the tall swidden houses
among you *liau* of the dead
that effigy over there
that's a substitute for the men
above all for Ma Mar
it is mister Lalung Runsom
just for you *jawa liau*[133]
to make wide ricefields
raise tall swidden houses
chop dry logs
split firewood
hunt with spears and many dogs
blowpipe-hunt in desolate forest
net fish in the deep pools
trap wild boar for you
on the top of Mount Lumut
in the village of Mount Peyuyan
there you have the beautiful noblewoman Rimpu
and mister Lalung Runsom
to substitute for the *pimping* plants alive

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[128] "*Tewok*" is another name for *kelewono*, the tree that provides the material for the spirit house constructed for the *liau*.

[129] Rinsum and Runsom are the bamboo figurines given in exchange.

[130] The chick/slave.

[131] E.g. the beautiful noblewoman Rinsum.

[132] Leaves used as wrapping for rice portions.

[133] A standard epithet for the *liau*.

80 in exchange for the *siwo* trees still strong
81 to substitute for the children and the old
82 in exchange for the women and the men
83 one-two-three-four-nine-ten-receive!
84 o-lo-lo-loo
85 stand up Dusun with the nimble hands
86 Buno the observer, Entau the discerner
87 Keling with two heads, Rewaja with two bodies
88 the blind noblewoman Ape
89 search, look in all directions
90 search, look up and down
91 together with you, the order of dead *belian*s
92 even if the bodies are dead
93 the spirit familiars are still alive
94 swarms of myna birds fluttering around
95 flocks of crows soaring all over
96 going upstream, going downstream
97 ascending the mountains, descending to the rivers
98 go as far as the pebbles at Pengular
99 head toward the stone stained with betel
100 go all the way to Siwo plain[134]
101 get the precious souls of the living plants alive
102 the life forces of the *siwo* trees still strong
103 above all those of Ma Mar
104 one-two-three-four
105 what is it, grandchildren?[135]
106 fight you macaques, fight
107 as long as your bellies do not burst
108 kick you hawks, kick
109 as long as your claws do not break off
110 don't go for clods of earth
111 don't collect the black of wood
112 be sure to look for beads
113 be sure to pick up pearls
114 like the knotholes in wild sugarcane
115 like undeveloped golden *asam* fruits[136]
116 one-two-three-four-nine-ten-grasp!
117 o-lo-lo-loo
118 calling out for the precious souls

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[134] An epithet for Pengular.

[135] Ma Putup here, in a somewhat humorous tone, refers to his spirit familiars as grandchildren, thereby speaking as from a position of a superordinate to subordinate, indicating that their role in the ritual is to serve him.

[136] To be precise, the fruits, i.e. wild mangos, referred to here are not unripe but fruits whose growth has ceased altogether at about thumbnail size.

119 reaching out for the eight life forces
120 the precious souls of Ma Mar [the patient]
121 the spirit essences of Rihei[137] [Nen Pore, his new partner]
122 Kakah Unsir, Itak Unsir [her parents]
123 the precious souls of Ma Unsir [her older brother]
124 the spirit essences of Kadir, Tiar [her daughter and son-in-law]
125 the precious souls of Ma Kerudot [her younger brother]
126 Nen Biru, the child Niko, the child Jeria [his wife, child, and Unsir's wife]
127 bamboo shoots, three to four pieces [unspecified child participants]
128 finish calling, stop catching, all are collected
129 the precious souls of Ma Lombang, Ma Bari, Ma Kelamo [see Fig. 1]
130 Nen Leget, the child Ena
131 the spirit essences of Ma Geli [Nen Leget's sister from Datai Munte]
132 Nen Tekalis, Nen Adir [Nen Bujok]
133 don't leave behind a single *torung* palm
134 a *kajang* palm in lonely, dark-earth forest
135 the whole family of Temiang village
136 the souls of the children as well as the old
137 the spirits of the women and the men
138 gather in the bowl of the tin
139 in the cavity of the Javanese receptacle[138]
140 from the top of Mount Lumut
141 from the village of Mount Peyuyan
142 from the *jawa liau*
143 from the *minsu maliu*[139]
144 from Nen Pare [Ma Mar's second late wife]
145 from Nen Mar [Ma Mar's first late wife]
146 from Ma Kale, Nen Kale, [Ma Mar's father's brother with wife]
147 Ma Keris, Nen Keris [Ma Mar's father and mother]

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[137] The meaning of the concept of *ruo*, which I have here alternately translated as "spirit essence" or "life force," appears to be very vague and should perhaps best be understood as a synonym of *juus*. No one that I talked to was in fact able to describe a referent distinct from the soul. Most commonly the concept is used in *belian* chants in connection with soul searches in the expression *juus jatus, ruo walo* ("a hundred souls, eight spirit essences"). In this expression, I was told, *ruo* merely serves to replicate *juus* in order to enable a so-called parallelistic construction. In addition, I was also told, there do not literally exist eight *ruo* any more than there are a hundred *juus*; these numbers are chosen solely because they rhyme with *ruo* and *juus*, respectively (and perhaps also because the numbers eight and one hundred represent completeness). An understanding of *ruo* as "spirit essence" and as closely synonymous with *juus* is further substantiated by the fact that the only context in which I encountered *ruo* on its own (without *juus*) was as a designation for what I understood to be the "spiritual essence" of primary forest groves.

[138] The line refers to the soul tin. It is nicknamed the "Javanese receptacle" because it is of non-local manufacture (everything foreign may be referred to as Javanese for short) but also so as to make it attractive in the eyes of the souls which are beckoned to enter it.

[139] Another epithet for the *liau*.

148 from Kakah Pulang, Itak Pulang [grandparents of Ma Mar's second late wife]
149 from Ma Resa, Nen Resa [parents of Ma Mar's second late wife]
150 from Ma Delidi [Ma Mar's present partner Nen Pore's dead brother]
151 finish calling and reaching out for
152 the precious souls, the spirit essences
153 don't leave behind a single *torung* palm
154 a *kajang* palm in lonely, dark-earth forest
155 don't let the *keramu* fruit disperse when collected
156 the *temeyano* fruit become scattered around
157 collect the souls of us envoys[140]
158 the spirits of the ritual assistants
159 the souls of the cherished children
160 the souls of the beloved wives
161 the many souls of us humankind
162 the numerous people inhabiting the earth
163 gather at the hole at the top of the head
164 tinkle the instrument of the precious soul[141]
167 the whistle calling spirit essences
168 so that it summons over the high mountains
169 calls out over the extensive valleys
170 so that the wild boars follow their routes
171 the deer gather in their tracks

Reciprocity and Respect as Authoritative Values

The chant illustrates several aspects of religious authority and how ritualization works authoritatively. One of the most prominent aspects of the chant is the elaborate description of the work tasks to be performed by the gendered bamboo figurines given to the *liau* in exchange for Ma Mar's and the other participants' souls (e.g. "pound white rice," "net-fish in the deep pools"). One may sense here a general moral conveyed by the chant, an affirmation of work as a valued activity. It is no coincidence that work (*awing*) and food (*okan*) are the two principal forms of prestations offered to the *liau* in the soul retrieval attempt: they are principal categories designating prestations in everyday social interaction as well. Food and work (including, not the least significantly, ritual work) are what kin should share. Poetic elaborations aside, the principal issue at stake in offering work prestations to the *liau* relates to the fact that one owes them something. The persons explicitly mentioned as representatives of the *liau* on these occasions are mainly, as in this case, persons with whom the patient or sponsors were close or at least personally

[140] The envoys are the *belian*s.

[141] The *belian*'s bear tooth whistle, which he uses to summon spirits and souls.

acquainted, and typically people on generational levels above oneself, who before dying did more for oneself than one had time to do for them. As elders, they are additionally regarded as one's "trunk" or "foundation" (*puun*), which means that one is indebted to them in a most fundamental way by, in a sense, owing one's life to them. Offering work prestations to the *liau* (or the *kelelungan*) thus signals the elementary obligation of paying back (*males*) one's ancestors, in terms with which the latter are familiar (e.g. swidden cultivation), and which index their human condition. Moreover, in so far as it is company that the dead want, "substitutes for the self" (which is the literal meaning of the generic terms *gantin unuk* or *ganti diri* used by Bentians for figurines such as the ones used here) is the best thing one can give, next to oneself.

In addition to envy and longing, a motive no less important for ancestral spirits to "ask for food" by capturing their descendants' souls is to communicate the latter's omission to reciprocate or respect them. The principal course of action whereby one can repay or honor the ancestors (and other spirits) is ritual. Holding a secondary mortuary ritual is essential in this regard: as much as it is performed in order to guide the *liau* and *kelelungan* to the afterworld, the *gombok* represents a gesture of gratitude and veneration toward the dead by their loved ones. But *buntang*s also, albeit perhaps less obviously, serve the same purpose. Whatever the specific motives for their arrangement, they are, I was told, about "paying back the debt to the ancestors" (*bales utang dayang kepanei*).[142] To hold a *buntang* is also to honor the ancestors, their ways and heritage (of which the *buntang* itself forms an important part), and the ancestral objects (*pusaka*) associated with them (which are anointed with blood during the ritual). In addition, holding a *buntang* is also about rewarding the ancestors more concretely in their capacity as protecting spirits (*pengiring*), and in this respect the animal sacrifices constitute payment explicitly dedicated to them (and the other *pengiring*).

In the case of Ma Mar's *buntang*, repaying the *liau* and *kelelungan* was particularly motivated because the *gombok* held for Nen Pare shortly after her death was very brief, lasting only three days and not involving a water buffalo sacrifice, an additional reason to expect discontent from her and her dead relatives. Wavering plans existed to remedy this condition by holding a new and larger *gombok* for her (and some other people) after the harvest the next year, and the *buntang* may in this respect have formed something of a compensatory measure, or at least an act of appeasement aimed at amelioration of her sentiments for the time being.

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[142] In this context it may be significant to note that the *buntang* in its basic outline parallels the *balian balaku untung* ritual of the Ngaju which is an integrated part of their secondary mortuary ritual (the *tiwah*). Rather than the opposite, however, the *buntang*'s dissociation with the *gombok* may, I suggest, be taken as an indication of a more continuing concern with the dead among the Bentian as compared with the Ngaju, typified also by the practice of keeping ancestor skulls, which was interpreted by Mallinckrodt (1974[1925]) as an expression of the greater ancestral orientation (and primitiveness) of the Luangan as compared with the Ma'anyan and the Ngaju.

Reciprocity and respect were identified as the principal values on which kinship as a moral code is centered. These principles figure prominently also in interaction with spirits, ancestral and other. Apart from making people keep rituals to honor or feed the spirits as well as obviously being what "paying respect" and "purchasing the soul" as substrategies of the soul retrieval attempt are about, concerns pertaining to these principles are also what is believed to induce the spirits to capture souls in the first place. I am not only referring to the fact that ancestral and other spirits alike are said to ask for food and thus, in effect, request rituals. Asked why spirits would want to steal the soul, Bentians most typically claim that it is because the person affected has succumbed to *tapen*, "failure to involve in social exchange." In the previous chapter, Udin's failure to share the meat which he publicly consumed was an example of an alleged instance of *tapen*. Besides failure to share or partake of food, failure to contribute work or participate in rituals are other common instances of *tapen*.

Tapen essentially seems to concern the transgression of elementary social norms, and more precisely, the breach of the injunction on reciprocity understood here broadly as encompassing all three of the components defined by Mauss (i.e. giving, receiving and reciprocating) (Mauss 1990:39-41). This fact receives a more general significance if we consider that the Bentian also recognize a range of other named types of transgressions (e.g. *pali,*[143] *bunsung,*[144] *sumbang*[145]), which like *tapen* a) may cause soul theft or other forms of misfortune induced by spirits and b) are essentially "social," that is, sanction interpersonal respect or reciprocity. Spirit attack is thus frequently a question of a moral# order — indeed I was often told that without transgression, one's soul will not be stolen. If we would ask what it is that spirit authority among the Bentian *does*, that is, what its existence entails, an important answer would be — besides making people arrange rituals — that it imposes reciprocity and respect as social values.

Talking with Bentians, however, it was revealed that most spirits do not actually steal souls in order to punish, particularly not those referred to as *blis*, "malevolent spirits,"

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[143] *Pali* could be loosely translated as "taboo" or "restriction." The term is used for an extensive number of permanent or temporary, individual or collective, restrictions (e.g. on eating certain foods, entering people's houses or swiddens on particular occasions, etc.) the breach of which may result in soul loss (or other afflictions) caused by the heavenly *pali* spirits (or sometimes other spirits). As part of the program of the *buntang*, the *pali* of the participants, meaning both their committed wrongs and the spirits so designated (who are said to "descend" upon breach of *pali* restrictions) are "ascended" to the accompaniment of the *belian*s cracking heated bamboo canes (*semotu*).

[144] *Bunsung* designates spirit-induced misfortune provoked by lack of respect for elders or people on higher generational levels.

[145] *Sumbang* designates illicit sexual or marital relations (e.g. incest, too close marriages, intergenerational marriages) liable to be punished by misfortune ultimately generated by the *seniang*.

who are the ones most frequently suspected of soul theft.[146] In fact, spirits are generally not considered particularly virtuous or concerned about people's morality (although there are some exceptions).[147] It is rather that succumbing to immoral action through the above-mentioned transgressions has the effect of weakening one's soul, and that the weakened soul makes one susceptible to soul loss by the agency of spirits.[148] In correspondence with this line of reasoning, it is said that spirits do not need any particular reason to steal souls; they simply have a desire to do so and will do so upon opportunity, that is, if they encounter weak souls (strong souls, by implication, can resist or discourage such attempts — at least somewhat more successfully).

Social interaction and the soul's condition are intimately connected as is evidenced by the fact that the soul can be strengthened by receiving payment or gifts (of money, cloth bundles, plates) in ritual.[149] It is almost as if involvement in social exchange has the capacity of strengthening the soul on its own accord. The plentiful participation and social concentration sought by rituals are regarded to contribute to the well-being of the patients cured. By analogy, valuables received through trade and or connecting the owner to ancestors or powerful outsiders are often endowed with the capacity to enhance the

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[146] The designation *blis* (which is derived from the Malay and originally Arabic word *iblis*) is mainly applied to various forest and "downriver" (*sawa*) spirits, especially in their capacity of stealing souls. Other spirits (e.g. the spirits of the dead and some protecting spirits) may also steal souls, but they would not normally be included in this category.

[147] The God-like and heavenly *seniang*, who are guardians over the fundamental conditions of nature and society (including, essentially, incest) are regarded almost as incarnations of morality. Actually they do not, in opposition to other spirits, capture souls, but instead inflict misfortune directly, so to speak, and for a purpose. The likewise heavenly *pali* spirits who "descend" (*dolui*) whenever someone has breached any of the *pali* taboos, capture souls but apparently also act out of moral concern when they do so. Ancestors generally, and the *kelelungan* in particular, are generally regarded as concerned about their descendants' morality, although when the latter or the *liau* capture souls, they seem to do so in order to ask for services rather than because of their moral concern.

[148] The fact that the soul's condition may be affected by socially improper or commendable action should not be taken to mean that it indicates its "owners" moral stature in any straightforward way, any more than experienced misfortune or success do. *Tapen* may, as we should note, punish all people involved, not just the offender (as in a case when someone fails to accept food, which endangers not only the receiver who fails to accept the food, but also the person offering it, and *vice versa*). Ideas regarding supernatural sanctions of social norms do not systematically add up to a system of individual reward and retribution. What is of primary concern is the demonstration of proper reciprocal relations rather than the accomplishment of individual justice; the outlook is socio-centric and performative rather than ego-centric and instrumental. The message is transmoral: social exchange is good for all whereas its lack is detrimental for all. For some other examples, we may note that the distribution of plates as rewards to the *belian*s and other participants after a ritual is extended to those who themselves present the plates (e.g. the sponsors), and that people in these contexts sometimes receive payment which is immediately returned afterwards.

[149] Here it is interesting to note that the word *sumange* in Nias (a cognate of the Malay word *semangat* which is usually translated as "soul") simply means "tribute" or "token of respect," indeed, is "a material payment devoid of inherent spiritual quality" (see Beatty 1992:250).

strength of the owner's soul (which is one reason why wealthy persons tend to have stronger souls). It is no coincidence that Mauss' most famous work (1990[1923-24]) begins with references to the Maorian *hau* and the Samoan *mana* as spiritual forces attached to the gift. Social exchange cannot be considered apart from the "spiritual" dimension and *vice versa*.

Mauss's statement regarding the Maori, that "the bond of law ... is a bond of souls" is thus highly pertinent to the Bentian (Mauss 1966:161, quoted in Sahlins 1972:153, Sahlins' translation). Religious authority, in the form of spirit authority, reproduces essential social values, in the best Durkheimian tradition. Conversely, reciprocity is the essence of religious authority; the demands on people which spirits make are authoritative because of the validity of reciprocity and related values. Fear of the consequences, of course, provides a critical incentive for responding to these demands, but Bentians also respond to them because they consider it right and proper to do so. This is quite natural in the case of the ancestors, who "came before" and to whom Bentians say they owe everything (and it is perhaps particularly understandable with regards to recently deceased relatives, to many of whom one personally owes much). However, the same applies as if by extension also to other spirits, many of whom originated as particular ancestors, and all of whom ultimately trace back their origin as children of the first man and woman (which makes them, as Bentian conceive of it, "the siblings of man"). Explaining their obligations to spirits, people may refer to the origin myth of mankind (*tempuun senaring*), or more particularly, to a passage in it where the one child (Punen) from whom mankind descends makes a promise to his runaway siblings who have turned into spirits to provide them with food whenever rituals are held.

Even though it seemed plausible that Ma Mar's listlessness had something to do with Nen Pare (either in the capacity as *liau* or *kelelungan*), a lot of other spirits were also treated as suspects of having abducted his soul. Some of these spirits were beings who more or less as a standard measure are addressed in cases of psychic distress: *keraatan* and *tentuwaja*, two categories of forest spirits who are said to cause bad dreams and "madness," respectively. For these and a range of other forest spirits (most of whom were not particularly associated with any of the "symptoms" that Ma Mar exhibited) a special "temple" (*balei nansang*) was prepared outside Kakah Unsir's house, a decorated platform upon which Ma Putup sat while conducting the soul search to them. During this soul search, particular attention was paid to spirits associated with localities that Ma Mar had recently visited or which were generally known as favorite habitations of spirits (e.g. a small lake hosting a species of large fish said to be owned by spirits). Also outside, at the ladder of Kakah Unsir's house, other special paraphernalia were constructed, and here a fair number of earth or underground spirits (Benturan tana, etc.) indicated as suspects by Ma Mar's recent fall were addressed. Yet other spirits, all of whom received species-specific spirit houses (containing rice paste figurines given in exchange for Ma Mar's

soul), were addressed inside Kakah Unsir's house, including the *naiyu* and *timang* protecting sprits of the house (who were perhaps not yet accustomed to Ma Mar's presence in the house), the *pali* spirits charged with sanctioning transgressions of *pali* prohibitions, and of course the *liau* and *kelelungan*.

Performative Authority

The fact that attempts to retrieve Ma Mar's soul, in accordance with normal procedure, were made from a great variety of spirits testifies to the general importance among the Bentian of maintaining good — which is to say reciprocal and respectful — relations with spirits. The plurality of addressees in the soul retrieval attempt further reflects that the Bentian, like the Weyewa of Sumba as described by Kuipers, "are usually less interested in finding a single agent who *caused* the calamity [or soul loss] than in exploring the ruptured *relationships* among the specific actors who participated in the event" (Kuipers 1990:42, orig. italics). A multitude of spirits are honored, offered sacrifices, and souls are bought back, and retrieved, from this multitude. This complex process is not enacted simply because of an uncertainty about which particular spirit has made the patient ill, or because of the associated belief that there is something in that particular spirit's possession (i.e. the soul), whose return to the patient would cause, as if by the laws of mechanics or organic chemistry, health to return to the patient (already the fact that there is an illness to be removed, in addition to a soul to be returned, makes the matter more complicated than that).[150] Rather, the whole enterprise should be interpreted as what Tambiah (1985b), following Austin (1962), has called a "performative" or "illocutionary" act.[151] What is postulated primarily is not a realistic

[150] These observations contrast to some degree with those of Michael Hopes who describes Benuaq and Tunjung curing rituals as if being essentially a quest of identifying the *right* spirit, about which he indicates that conclusive evidence may be obtained through symptoms, dreams and techniques of divination (1997b:42,63-72). No Bentian *belian*s or other Bentians whom I talked with ever claimed to know with certainty exactly which spirit was involved in particular cases, and despite indications of the identity of culprits obtained in the ways described by Hopes, several suspects always remained, and soul retrieval attempts and offerings were invariably addressed to a number of different spirit categories (often a remarkably large number), which in themselves consisted of many individual spirits.

[151] Tambiah (1985a, 1985b) talks about rituals as performative acts in several respects, but most basically in the sense of illocutionary acts (cf. 1985a:78-80, 1985b:134-35). As such, rituals *do* something "simply by virtue of being enacted (under the appropriate conditions)," in the manner, for instance, of greetings, or wedding ceremonies (1985b:135). This performative aspect of rituals "is to be distinguished from their locutionary (referential, information-carrying) and perlocutionary (consequences for the participants) features" (1985a:79). The validity of rituals as performative acts is independent from their (locutionary) truth value and their (perlocutionary) effectiveness in a causal respect. By proposing that Bentian soul retrieval attempts should be regarded as performative, I want to emphasize what they *do* ("simply by virtue of being enacted"), and point to the relative importance

one-to-one correspondence between enacted ritual action and what is assumed to take place. Instead, a number of conceivable scenarios are displayed and an ideal order of relationship with the various imaginable "culprits" restored. As a *belian* told me, it is important to retrieve the soul from a variety of "directions" (*tuduh*) even though one would "know" who has taken it (which one can never really do); such action is beneficent in itself by working to maintain good relations with the spirits. Thus I may concur here with Valeri's (1985:67) view that sacrifices (including the figurines given by Bentians in exchange for the soul) primarily represent the relationship between the giver and the receiver.

The chant and other songs in the ritual concerned with the same issue notably makes no mention of whether or not Ma Mar's and the other participants' souls were returned from the *liau*; it merely describes the spirit familiar-assisted attempts to do so. Only Ma Putup's and his co-*belian* Ma Kerudot's accompanying performance of first grasping for something in the air and then putting that something in the soul tin, and finally returning it to the participants' heads, could be taken to indicate that the operation was successful. But, as Ma Putup told me, these are things that one cannot be sure of; when and if this happens one cannot tell. A more or less identical procedure was conducted with respect to a large number of other spirits (and it had in fact already once been conducted in ralation to the *liau* at Saung Pingen, a location slightly downstream from Pengular). Precisely when, then, during these repeated attempts, Ma Mar's soul was caught — or if it was caught at all — remained unclear. In fact, there probably existed no real expectations that it should have been caught at any *particular* moment (and in this respect, the situation was undoubtedly even more unclear with regards to the other participants' souls, which may not even have been lost in the first place). Clearly, the activity should not be taken too literally. Only Ma Mar's recovery — which as regards his flu was complete even before the ritual was over, but gradual and indefinite as regards his listlessness — could have been taken as an indication that his soul had been restored to his body, should he or anyone else have wanted one. However, he probably did not reflect much on this (significantly, I did not ask him) as he eventually got better. Generally, such matters are not of direct or continuing concern for Bentians, but invoked mainly *ex post facto* when things go wrong.

What this indicates is that the referential aspect of ritual practices is of secondary importance. What actually takes place in the invisible world is frequently quite unclear for Bentians, including *belian*s, and a literal reading of ritual practices is therefore often unwarranted and besides the point, so to speak (an example here is Ma Putup's claim that some of the spirit familiars invoked — "Dusun with the nimble hands, Buno the

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of this aspect of the practice in contrast to the literal statements about reality that it makes (e.g. in terms of cosmology), and the indirect anticipated effects which it may or may not bring about (cure illness, affect social relations).

observer," etc. — do not really exist but rather illustrate desirable properties of spirit familiars). A certain degree of scepticism in religious matters, reflecting perhaps the often expressed Bentian idea that you cannot know what you have not seen or experienced personally, is also quite common (cf. Rousseau, 1998:114-118, for reports of similar scepticism or what he calls "agnosticism" among the Kayan). Regarding spirits and offerings made to them in rituals, Udin, the protagonist of the last chapter, told me: "they cannot be seen, [so] it is not certain that they exist, but there exists the belief from the past, [so] you just have to give [them]" (*beau ditan, beau tentu naan, tapi naan kepercayaan ke bayuh, paksa ngokoi*). More important than scepticism, however, which tends to be suspended and rarely involves contestation of ritual practices, there is commonly a basic uncertainty about *what to believe*, as reflected by the remarkably unrationalized, frequently inconsistent character of many Bentian beliefs, with the beliefs about souls and ancestral souls being a case in point here[152]. Vagueness, uncertainty or even contestation of the meaning of ritual practices, however, is normally inconsequential to their performance; rather, their performative aspect is most essential.

Obviously, the authority of ritualization is not so much derived from the truth value of the referential claims that it involves (or even its desired perlocutionary effects) as from what it does "by virtue of being enacted" (Tambiah 1985b:135).[153] This leads us to a very important fact, namely, that the appropriation of religious authority among the Bentian is, as Rousseau claims it to be among the Kayan, "tacit" rather than "didactic" (Rousseau 1998:118). Like kinship authority, its force derives mainly from the impact

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[152] Informants often claimed ignorance regarding the qualities of the soul and ancestral souls, as they did also with respect to characteristics of spirits. Typically they said that "only the *belian*s know" (*ede belian ye tau*) but even the *belian*s were often unknowing. Manifest beliefs, in their turn, were frequently inconsistent. To give an example, people generally believed that the *liau* and *kelelungan* linger around the deceased's former home or grave until the *gombok* has been held for them in order to help them find their way to their afterworldly abodes. At the same time, however, *liau* and *kelelungan* were commonly said to go these places immediately upon death, and at rituals the *warah* assisted by their spirit familiars first fetched them from there for the ritual before escorting them back. Somewhat similarly, the *juus* is supposed to be attached to the body (or possibly temporarily detached) but it also enters the soul house at the conclusion of *buntang*s where it is said to stay between rituals, protected by the *belian* at a location in heaven. As yet another example, it is unclear, and perhaps essentially ambiguous, whether or not those *kelelungan* who are said to be "brought to the house (along with the ancestor skulls that represent them) to become protecting spirits" continue to stay at Tenangkai in heaven like other *kelelungan*, and whether it is they, or the *naiyu* spirits that they sometimes are said to become, who are addressed through the skulls during *buntang*s.

[153] As an indication of the importance of the illocutionary as opposed to the perlocutionary aspect of rituals, we may perhaps read the fact that when Bentians complain about rituals it is less about whether they succeed or not than whether or not they correspond to proper, conventional form (i.e. in terms of whether or not they are valid in an illocutionary sense) (cf. Tambiah 1985a:81-83). Failures may always be due to insurmountable adversity, but, irrespective of whether post-ritual developments are "successful" or not, rituals may or may not be valid, and on that ground criticizable (and therefore, if they fail, they may be plausibly regarded to have done so for this reason).

of regularly performed social action — ritual practice — which especially by way of tactile and sensory impressions as opposed to cognitive influence works to instil particular moods, persuasions and dispositions among its performers. Rather than the intellectual internalization of dogma, it is personally lived tradition sedimented as "the natural attitude" of daily life (cf. Schutz 1970:72-73) which makes ritualization among the Bentian in Bell's (1992:115) words "the appropriate thing to do."

Anonymization, Entextualization, and Indirectness

If it is the performative aspect which counts, what, then, is it that ritualization in the case of *buntang*s and more particularly through the institution of the soul search *does*? I will address this question at some length as I believe that it can give some clues as to why ritualization is authoritative. A very direct and condensed answer would be that it *provides a way of acting upon varied socio-existential concerns of particular people by translating these concerns into problems of soul loss and obligations to unseen agencies*.

The most obvious implication of this is that the concerns in question become addressed through what could be called "soul and spirit discourse," a fact which is already evident in Ma Putup's chant. To perceive its full significance, it should be noted that not only is this "metaphorical" dimension *added* to the "real" dimension of what "really" is at stake, but the latter dimension tends to become *displaced* to the point that very little direct or explicit attention is given to it in the ritual, a fact which struck me as I got to know the contents of the various chants of the *buntang*. What this means is that the patient and the participants, albeit mentioned by name, become in a way depersonalized; their attributes and the particularity of the events which occasioned the ritual are largely invisible in the chants and take almost no expression in the actions performed as part of the ritual program. For instance, the description of the illness in Ma Putup's chant ("as if marked by soot, as if bound up by rattan") is plainly metaphorical and reveals, as is typical, nothing about the specific condition of Ma Mar's "illness." Likewise no explanation as to why the *liau* would want to steal the soul is proposed, apart from hunger (the metaphor *par excellence* in Bentian society) which actually detracts from the more specific motives that the *liau* may have had to capture Ma Mar's soul (as does the mention of a number of other ancestors along with Nen Pare).

The ritual, then, in some ways treats the event as if it were just one instance among many. However, here lies much of its appeal, and without this aspect it would, in a sense, be much less of a ritual. Other positive features of the ritual also serve to produce the same effect, from which much of the authority of ritualization is in fact derived. The anonymization of the event means that the ritual foregrounds structure, that is, its own internal order (of prescribed procedures pertaining to supernatural agencies) which

Photographs

Plate 1. Swidden house (*blai ume*)

Plate 2. Forest *lou*

Platte 3. The *lou solai* of Sambung village

Plate 4. *Lou solai* surrounded by "development houses" (*rumah pembangunan*, I.)

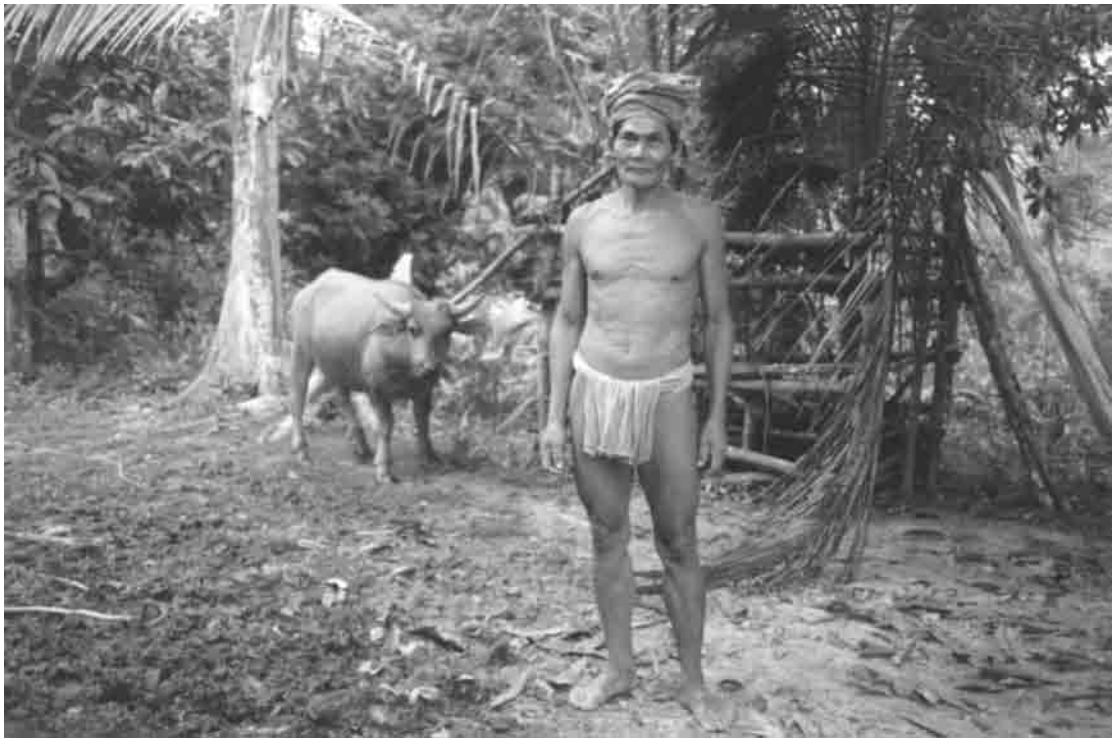

Plate 5. Man and water buffalo on a swidden

Plate 6. Expressing discomfort at a *perkara*

Plate 7. Making an accusation at a *perkara*

Plate 8. Holding on to a spear and scattering rice at the conclusion of a *perkara*

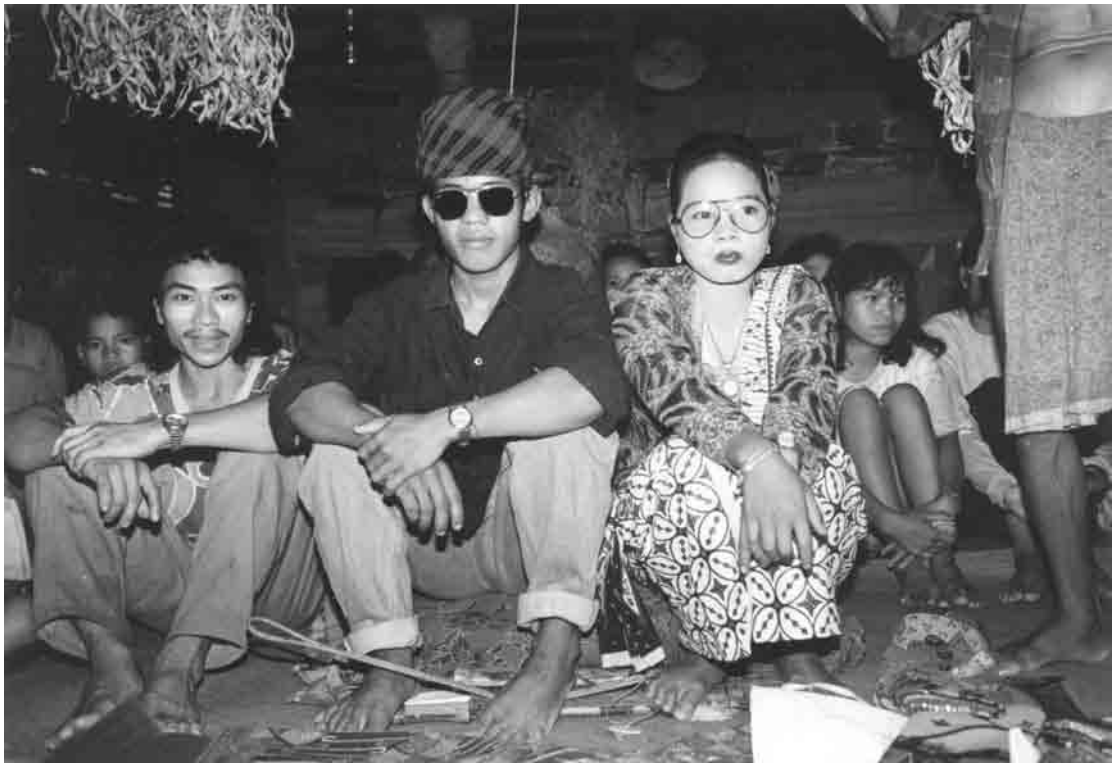

Plate 9. Wedding. The bridal couple in a state

Plate 10. A *belian* dances while holding chickens by the *longan*, devoting them to the protecting spirits of the house

Plate 11. *Belian sentiu*. The *belian* holds the suspended *sarong* rope (*penyelenteng*) down which spirits descend

Plate 12. *Belian*s blessing a new bridge on the interprovincial road watched by schoolchildren

Plate 13. *Ngebidan* for an eight-day old child

Plate 14. A *belian* presenting offerings to spirits which have possessed a man

Plate 15. Elderly *belian* leadsinging while two apprentices “follow in” (*nuing*)

Plate 16. Entering the soul house (*blai juus*) at the conclusion of a *buntang* ritual

Plate 17. Collective bathing at an outdoor shrine during *buntang*

Plate 18. Plate and meat distribution after a ritual

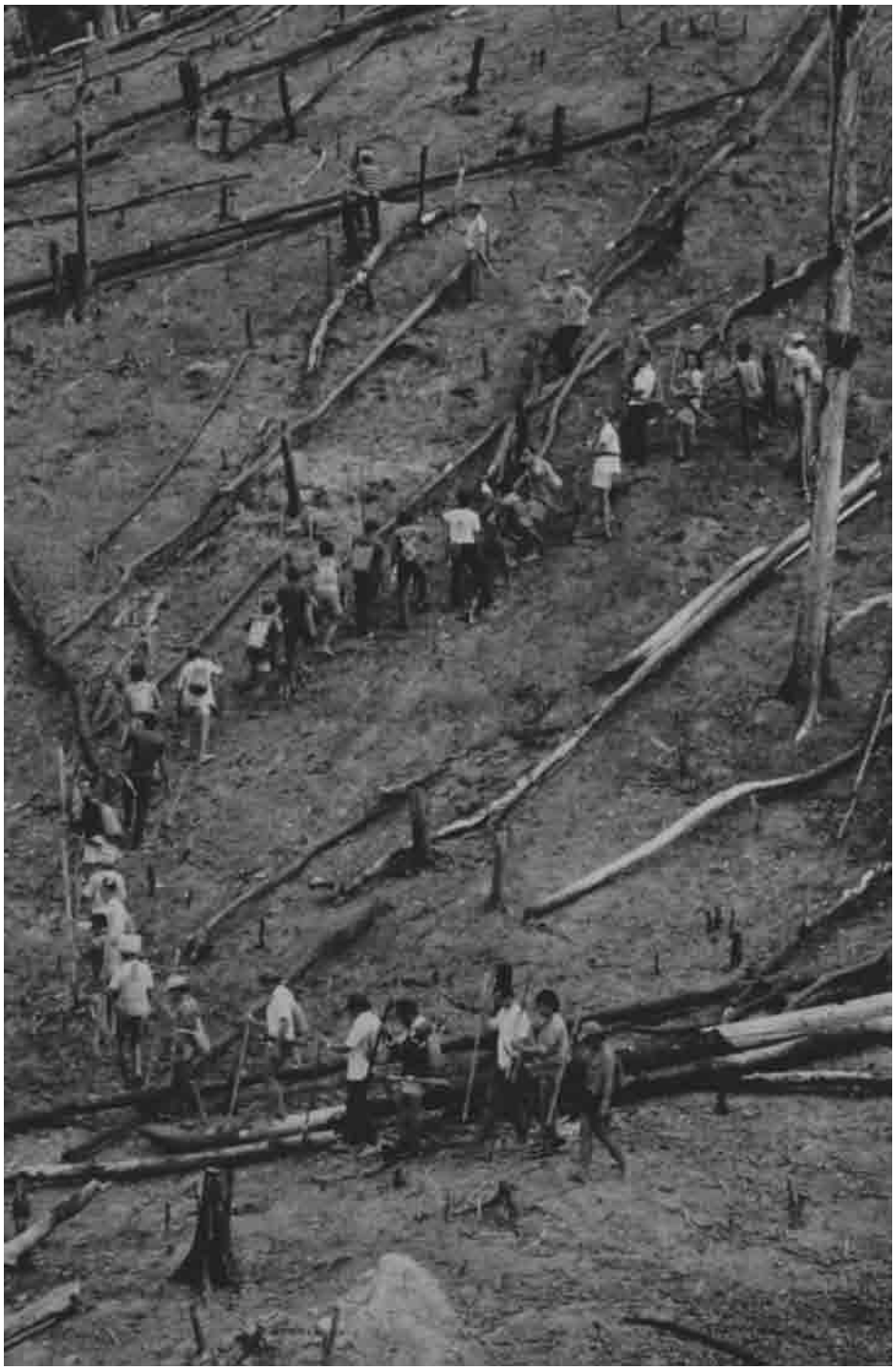

Plate 19. *Mementian*

Plate 20. Three “sisters” showing finished and unfinished rattan baskets

Plate 21. *Blontang* sacrificial pole

Plate 22. Displaying heirlooms

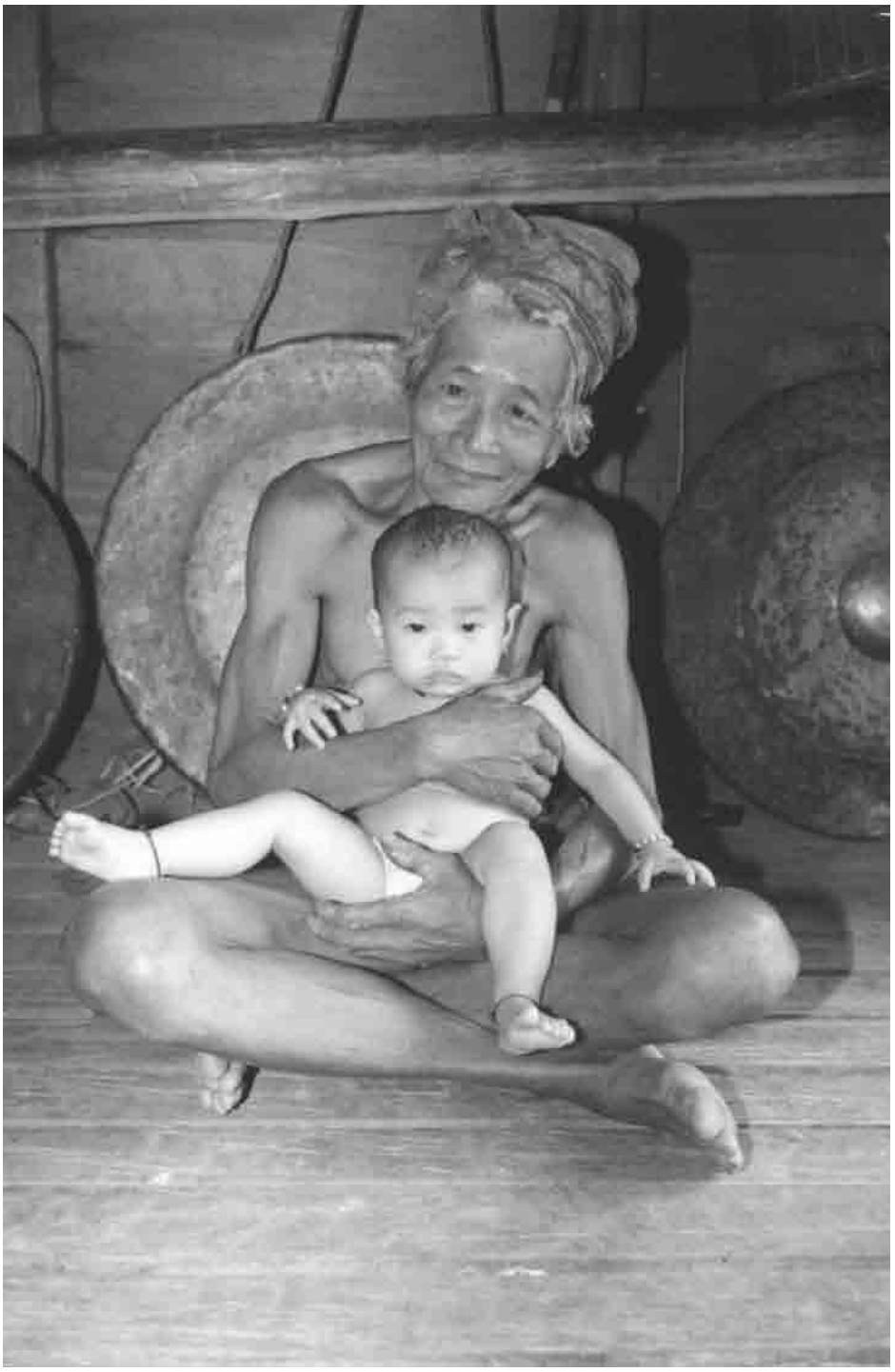

Plate 23. Man and grandchild

Plate 24. *Manti* giving a speech

remains more or less the same from event to event. It thus functions to invoke tradition and portray the event as something which this authoritative institution can be used to act upon. Here, it is appropriate to talk about "entextualization," a concept which has gained popularity in anthropological studies of language (e.g. Bauman and Briggs 1990; Keane 1997; Kuipers 1990).[154] If understood in a loose sense, as the transformation of something into an instance of something more general, this concept may be used not only for aspects of language use, but also for non-linguistic aspects of ritualization. In fact, by involving the subordination of event to structure through the transfiguration of the more or less unique socio-existential concerns and conditions of the patient and the sponsors into a standardized interpretation in the shared and encompassing cultural code of ritual, ritualization, in a very basic respect, is entextualization.

Another thing which anonymization does is permit rituals to address issues indirectly. Trading in accusations and sensitive assumptions (of soul theft, of soul loss induced by misbehavior) and the delicate matter of intra- and inter-family relations, this indirectness is a critical resource for *buntang*s. Among the Bentian, socially disruptive or otherwise sensitive issues are not comfortably addressed and preferably avoided, especially in public. This disinclination for socially confrontative action goes hand in hand with a tendency to indirectness which forms a conspicuous aspect of Bentian culture expressed, among other things, in the use of metaphor and indirect reference to persons, the use of envoys in ritual and other formal contexts, and in various types of what might be called "implicitly allusive action" (such as deliberately missing someone's rituals in response to offense). Thanks to the anonymity which it allows, ritualization also forms an avenue for indirect and implicit action, as it did, in several instances, in the case of Ma Mar's *buntang*.

Although ostensibly being about curing Ma Mar's flu by retrieving his soul and requesting well-being for him and his new family, Ma Mar's *buntang* also served to address several other concerns, some of which it would have been inappropriate to address openly. One very obvious concern which in important ways related to Nen Pare was the fact that Ma Mar now had moved in with Nen Pore without a marriage ceremony having been performed. A wedding was not arranged at this stage probably because it was felt that it would have been too soon after Nen Pare's death, especially when considering Ma Mar's listlessness (which indicated Nen Pare's discontent). In a way, the couple was also, because of the marital history of their relatives involving their own close association

[154] The term entextualization refers to a complex process whereby a speech event or a piece of discourse is rendered structured (in the sense of text-like), and hence becomes extractable from the context of utterance and, typically, associated with another context or with something transcendent of the context (e.g. tradition, or a particular form of speech). It encompasses, in the terms of Bauman and Briggs (1990), both "decontextualization" and "recontextualization." In my usage of the term, the emphasis is on the aspect whereby a speech event, or another phenomenon (such as non-linguistic ritual action) becomes associated with something transcendent of the context.

with each other as relatives and "house-mates," already so close as to be practically married, which made a marriage somewhat dispensable from a practical point of view as well as somewhat inappropriate (by reinforcing an already rather extreme kin group endogamy regarded as backward by modernization-minded outsiders and even, on occasion, by other villagers). The couple also maintained an exceptionally low relational profile in public at the same time as they privately appeared affectionate.[155] Whatever the reason(s) not to marry — it was not a question of resources, as the *buntang* demanded no less than a wedding would have — their present status was clearly improper, as *adat* (customary law) proscribes non-marital relations. This condition motivated a *buntang*, and did so much more than the assumed loss of Ma Mar's soul *per se*, for which an ordinary curing ritual, which had not previously been held in this case, would have sufficed. Because of the nature of their relation it was decided to address the godly *seniang* spirits who oversee *adat* and sexual relations — and who may only be addressed during *buntang*s (or *nalin taun*). Attempting to appease these, and by extension, other spirits, in this matter thus formed an important objective of Ma Mar's *buntang*.

This leads us to another important thing that *buntang*s do (in addition to entextualizing, translating concerns into soul and spirit discourse, and allowing indirect consideration of sensitive issues), namely, redress reality retrospectively (or occasionally, prospectively). The fact is that people sometimes live together without a "proper" ceremony having been conducted (e.g. in polygamous unions) and, conversely, that they marry when it is improper for them to do so (e.g. in the case of parallel cousin marriage, which is proscribed).[156] In such cases, ritualization in the form of a *buntang* (or *nalin taun*) is necessary and, significantly, often also sufficient to authorize the unions (parallel cousin marriage, sanctified in this way, is almost as common as cross cousin marriage, at least in one village where I made systematic comparisons). What this means is that *buntang*s, through the appropriate offerings, words and actions can recompense for and thereby validate or authorize conditions which in principle are unacceptable. Through rituals, Bentians say, "what's bad is made good, what's wrong is made right" (*ye daat*

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[155] In public, Bentians generally give very little expression of love or sexual affection (one never witnesses kisses, for instance). In this case the couple did not even address each other as spouses or act as such by publicly performing different daily chores together, with the notable exception of entering the soul house at the conclusion of the ritual together.

[156] The prohibition against marriage of one's parallel cousins (*bawen tumar, soong tumar*) pertains to cousins up until about third range. It is said that close cousins cannot be married if there has not occurred a "change of face" (*ganti wai*), that is, that the sex of the siblings in the connecting generation is different (and preferably also that of the connecting parents of the prospected couple). The only explanation for the prohibition that I could elicit is that parallel cousins are closer (and, implicitly, too close) than cross cousins, in its turn a result of the generally closer relation between same sex siblings (and cousins). One could imagine such closeness to reflect notions of some sort of substance transmitted specifically or predominantly along lines of same-sex descendants (cf. Peletz 1988) although I obtained no such information from informants.

dulek buen, ye sala dulek kunen).[157] Ritualization, which as this shows, not only serves to sanction *adat* and so-called social values but also offers a possibility to solve problems in contravention of such values, is regarded by Bentians to hold a supreme capacity to legitimize various states and affairs in the eyes of people as well as spirits. Post-ritual developments (e.g. persisting illness or misfortune), may sometimes challenge this legitimacy, it is true, but such potential indications of spirit disapproval are also open to new and other interpretations unrelated to earlier events and rituals, which means that they do not automatically entail contestation.

According to Michael Jackson (1998:24), "Objectively, stories and ritual scenarios seldom tell the truth about what actually happened. They tell a truth that enables people to live in the here and now with what happened *to* [orig. emphasis] them in the past. In this sense, the scenarios are expedient lies; they prioritize the existential urge to remaster experience rather than the epistemological need to preserve an exact record of it." This quotation can be taken to recapitulate some of the observations made here both as regards the importance of the performative as opposed to the referential aspect of rituals, and with respect to ritualization's redressing capacity. In addition, it points to the important fact that rituals, including *buntang*s, have a special ability to establish what we might call "existential control," typically in response to an experienced loss of agency (represented among the Bentian as soul loss). Control in this respect should not be understood primarily in a very strong sense of, say, a capacity for prediction or domination (even though such control may at times be an objective of *buntang*s), but rather in the sense of maintaining or regaining agency by validating, redefining, or at least making sense of a particular condition or state of affairs. Instead of existential control, it would be possible here to talk about performative, or illocutionary control (as opposed to instrumental, or perlocutionary, control denoting control in the above-mentioned stronger respect). Control as I use the concept here, obviously influenced by Jackson's (1998:17-22) treatment of it, may not involve the power to actually achieve what one wants; more likely, it merely entails something akin to what we refer when we speak of "getting control over a situation," that is, obtaining an understanding of what goes on which allows one to "do what there is to do," or at least "do something." It is a basic capacity which people struck by misfortune need to gain, and what it bears persuasive witness to is that ritualization, at the same time as it serves to salute tradition and superimpose structure on events, also works the other way around by doing something for the event and the practical interests of the participants.

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[157] A literal translation of this expression would be that "what's bad is *told* good, what's wrong is *told* right." The essence of the expression, however, is in that by "telling something good or right" one simultaneously transforms it. The emphasis on *telling* (i.e. on verbal activity) may also be taken to indicate the centrality of chants in ritual action.

The Authority of Ritual Language

Apart from the issues discussed so far, Ma Putup's chant can also be taken to illustrate some quite different issues, perhaps the most obvious being ritual language. I will discuss ritual language here as its authority critically contributes to make ritualization authoritative as well as forms the basis of *belian* authority. Moreover, many of the properties which make ritual language authoritative also characterize other aspects of rituals, which means that an investigation of ritual language can say a lot about what makes ritualization in general authoritative.

What I call ritual language is referred to by Bentians as either *basa belian* (*belian* language) or *basa luangan* (because is is associated with the Luangan ritual tradition originating in the central Luangan area). This language is similar enough to everyday language to be broadly intelligible to all Bentians.[158] However, it contains a large number of words which are not used in everyday speech, a good deal of which are unintelligible to many or most people. Some of these words are archaic, others loan words from other languages, and some are words which are exclusively used in ritual language (cf. Metcalf 1989, who identifies the same categories of words in Berawan ritual language). Many of the latter words are said to have no meaning of their own, and are used only as "extensions" (*penyeleloi*) of other words. In addition, ritual language is characterized by the extensive use of a number of stylistic devices which are only sparsely used in everyday language. There is thus a significant difference between ritual and everyday language, even as there is also a continuum between them.

Bentians characterize ritual language as "roundabout" or "indirect" (*mengkelotes, beau kentes*), designations which they may also apply to "the language of customary law" (*basa adet, basa perkara*), which shares many of the distinguishing features of ritual language, as well as to "the language of the ancestors" (*basa tuha one*), which allegedly also did so. Indirectness or elaborateness in language, as well as in behavior, is generally considered "refined" (*halus*, I.), and is thus a positive quality distinguishing ritual language from everyday speech. Another such quality of ritual language is its association with ancestral tradition — which is one of the most sacrosanct concepts of the Bentian — of which it forms a major example. In being conceived as different than everyday language, ritual language is thus also constructed as the more authoritative. Hence, ritual language can be described like Bell has described the ritualization process in general, namely, as "a way of acting which establishes a privileged contrast, differentiating itself as more important or powerful" (1992:90).

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[158] This is true to a much lesser extent among most Luangan subgroups whose languages differ much more from the language of the central Luangan area than does the Bentian language.

Of the stylistic devices employed in ritual language, two of the most important, which are also major factors accounting for its indirectness and elborateness, are metaphor and parallelism. The pervasive use of these devices in Ma Putup's chant is conspicuous. Of metaphor, evident examples are the depiction of the soul as pearls, animals, etc., the description of the *liau* as "fish of deep forests" or the spirit familiars as "swarms of myna birds," and the rendering of the condition of being ill in terms of markings by soot, etc. "Afraid that you're asking for food," of course, also qualifies as an example, even though this line may simultaneously be read literally. Yet another example is the notion of "tall swidden houses" (see lines 60 and 68) which is my gloss for the word *tompong*, a word designating a kind of former swidden house which for defensive purposes was built on very high piles (15 feet and more). What is referred to in this connection, however, is an ordinary swidden house; here, as usual today, the word *tompong* is used with *blai*, the standard Bentian word for house, to form the expression *blai tompong* which means simply "house," particularly in the sense of "a house of one's own."

What the use of metaphor demonstrates is that poetic elaborations, far from being beside the point, are essential to the task at hand. A principal effect of metaphorical expression is that it makes ritual language indirect and elaborate and thus refined, which is particularly appropriate considering the purpose of such language of making appeals to the spirits (cruder language could imply disrespect or at least be less compelling). These qualities do, of course, also appeal to the human audience which provides an additional reason for the *belian*s to use such language so as to guarantee their own popularity and prestige as practitioners of their trade. Moreover, metaphor, like such devices as rhyme and alliteration, which, albeit infrequent in my translation, are abundant in Ma Putup's original (e.g. see lines 15 and 16 or 46 and 47), amounts to a general poetification in a conventional code which identifies the text as part of tradition. Thus the performance receives the authorizing stamp of tradition as it becomes validated as a faithful representation of it. Another property of ritual language which obviously contributes to the same effect is the use of archaisms, but the use of loan words and other special words not employed in everyday speech is also relevant here. The use of all these special words testifies to the fact that authoritative words tend to be distanced or transcendent, associated with something more or other than the everyday here and now. The most important object of association in this respect is the more or less ancient ancestral past, but the foreign, an archetype of which is Java, is also important, which explains the essentially flattering reference to the *liau* as "*jawa liau*" (lines 66, 142) or the nicknaming of the soul tin as the "Javanese receptacle" (line 139). The use of Kutai Malay associated with the former Kutai sultanate as the language of *belian sentiu* curing rituals convincingly attests to the same fact. The ancestral past is one of the most thoroughly objectified sources of authority in both everyday speech and ritual contexts.

The use of special words in *belian*'s chants is to an important extent the result of the other principal stylistic device, parallelism. This concept, discussed generally by Fox (1974, 1975, 1988), and in the Bornean context by Peter Metcalf (1989), refers to the practice of pairing words or lines into couplets or dyadic sets, a process which may take place on several linguistic levels (semantic, syntactic, phonological, prosodical). Again, the translation has resulted in a considerable reduction of the use of this device in the text, but many examples remain as almost every second line more or less closely repeats or complements the previous one (cf. lines 13 and 14, "thrust by the pole of sickness / stung by piercing maladies," or 1 and 2, "*liau* who may be seen in dreams at night / *liau* who can be glimpsed at noon," or 11 and 12, "that he's rearing a dying chicken / a tame pigeon with slack wings"). Typically, the second line in such contexts adds little by way of content, and in any case primarily serves to replicate the previous line. The same is also true for many of those individual words which Bentians say are used as "extensions" (*penyeleloi*) of other words, that is, as the second word of a word pair (which may follow the first word either immediately, or in the next line). As examples of such word pairs from Ma Putup's chant we may again mention "*blai tompong*" and "*jawa liau*" expressions, as well as "*minsu maliu*," another epithet for the *liau*, used "solely to extend *jawa liau*" with which it also assonates.

Bentian parallelism is clearly less canonical than the more extensively studied eastern Indonesian variants, and in terms of combinations of lines and words it is much less restricted or prescribed (cf. Metcalf, 1989:30, for similar findings among the Berawan). However, like them it is a pervasively applied poetic device whose use tends to involve the application of an elevated, or at least authoritative, code. As in the case of metaphor, what counts in parallelism is not the meaning, that is, the literal statements made by parallelistic constructions which, as said, often add little by way of meaning anyway, but their use, that is, the pragmatic, interactional outcomes of their application (Keane 1997:109-111).[159] One such outcome, to which I have already made reference, is entextualization. Kuipers has identified parallelism as a "textualizing device," that is, as something "which functions ... to detach discourse from the immediate constraints of utterance and attach it to a shared, coherent, and authoritative tradition" (1990:71). Predominantly conventional, memorized pieces of oral tradition, Bentian parallelisms have a relatively fixed and objectified character which eases their attribution to the authoritative cultural order which they purport to represent. Like reported speech, which is the general form in which the *belian*s tend to present such and other formulaic aspects of their chants, parallelisms thereby also deemphasize the particularity of the immediate occasion and the agency of the performer. As Keane, describing the Anangkalese of

[159] This situation apparently contrasts with that described by Fox (1975) for the Rotinese, for whom the couplets of ritual language express important (binary) semantic relations encoding a cultural ontology.

Sumba, has remarked with respect to reported speech, it "like other decontextualizing features of ritual speech [e.g. parallelism], seems to insist that what's happening is not a direct expression of the individual interests or agencies of the speakers" (1997:117). As Keane also has observed, such aspects of ritual language may reflect an attitude of deference (1997:116), an attitude which also (at least ideally) characterizes the *belian*s' use of ritual language — and other Bentians' use of other kinds of poetic language. Such language represents the language of the ancestors, to which Bentians attribute special powers: "in the days of the ancestors" (*jaman tuha one*) they say, somewhat in the manner of how Christians talk about the word of God in Genesis, "what was expressed could come into being" (*ye dulek tau jadi*). As among the Anangkalese or the Wana, where ancestral language is endowed with the same capacity (cf. Keane 1997:99; Atkinson 1989:53,314), these notions are associated with a conception of the ancestral past as an unsurpassable glorious age, and a concomitant view of subsequent history as in a cultural decline, reminiscent of that ascribed by Geertz (1980) to the nineteenth century Balinese *negara*.[160] The very authority of that elevated ancestral past, in combination with the fact that the gist of the values with which it is associated are collectivism and concord, make the proper manner of appropriating ancestral authority (e.g. by using ancestral language) deferent and self-depreciating.

Another important outcome of the use of parallelism — and of other devices of poetification as well — is that it formalizes relations (with spirits as well as people) and contexts (e.g. rituals, but also any other context when it is used) and thereby makes contestation difficult. We already discussed formalization in the previous chapter as an important interactional device employed to serve community interests or community values (e.g. generosity toward kin) or individual interests if expressed as kin interests (as in Udin's letter to his relatives). As Bloch (1974, 1975) argues, much of its force is derived from its ability to enable a kind of communication which inhibits opposition, at least within the code and conditions which it itself establishes. Ritual is an obvious example of formalization, as is ritual language which forms Bloch's example. What holds true for the formal requests made in the name of kinship discussed in the previous chapter, holds true even more with respect to these institutions: there is no arguing against what the *belian*, acting as the voice of the ancestors, says, at least not for the time that he holds the floor.

[160] This model of history, which might be described as something of an inversion of the Western myth of progress, is of course, not uncontested. The Western myth of progress, heralded by the New Order regime as a national project (and, before that, by other governments), has deeply influenced the Bentian resulting in them now having an essentially ambivalent attitude to their ancestral past, many aspects of which they are ashamed and refuse to acknowledge.

Formalization not only serves as an authorizing device inhibiting contestation, but also, in the sense of increasing adherence to prescribed form, works to make ritual language and other forms of ritual action authoritative.[161] By being structured and thus conceived as following a locally variable cultural script, formalized ritual action functions to define a right way of saying and doing things. And by setting such a standard, it simultaneously contributes to create the preconditions for its own authoritativeness, as the process of definition has the effect of imposing restrictions on what is right action, right words, or right material prestations, which makes them scarce and valuable resources. Thus, parallelism, like other linguistic or extra-linguistic devices amounting to formalization, in a sense makes ritualization something of a self-generating source of authority, a machinery producing its own fuel.

As should be obvious by now, many of the properties of ritual language also characterize other ritual media involved in the ritualization process, and it has been my intention to say something about ritualization in general through looking at ritual language. Formalization, for instance, is affected also by such factors as the sequencing and spatial organization of the different activities of the ritual (see Table 1), the prescribed form of the ritual actions pertaining to them (e.g. the tossing of chicken feathers and pig bristles by the participants over their heads as signs to the protecting spirits of the approaching animal sacrifices during *Betangai*, Dedicating the Sacrificial Animals), and by the relatively fixed material setup of the ritual, including the numerous paraphernalia, such as spirit houses, decorations, and different types of offerings and sacrifices made. Similarly, metaphor is often a feature of non-linguistic symbolic ritual action, such as when the *belian*s on the concluding morning of the ritual during *Ngejala* use the intestines of a pig as a fishnet to catch any remaining bad influences represented by a few betel nuts floating in a hand basin filled with water.

At least two other properties of linguistic and other ritual media, often discussed as general characteristics of ritual (e.g. Tambiah 1985b; Bell 1992) warrant some brief discussion here, namely, redundancy and condensation. Bentian ritual language is excessively redundant, typically stating whatever is on its agenda numerous times in several different ways. The same also goes for ritual action, particularly in *buntang*s;

[161] As Judith Irvine (1979) has demonstrated, the concept of formality covers several distinct notions which frequently are conflated. She discusses four principal such notions, all of which are relevant to at least some of the examples of formalization that I have discussed (lawsuits, Udin's letter, kin requests, elders' monologues, ritual settings, ritual language). With respect to the social situations that I have described, formality in the sense of an "emergence of a central situational focus" (a "dominant engagement" involving all or most participants) and the "invoking of positional identities" (marked by respectfulness and relatively strict role behavior) are particularly relevant, although formality in Irvine's two other senses of "increased code structuring" and "code consistency" also apply to some degree. On the other hand, when I talk about formalization in the sense of "increasing adherence to form" (as a property of ritual media), it is especially these two latter aspects of formality that contribute to this aspect of formalization.

many of the activities listed in Table 1 serve essentially similar purposes as some other ones, and are best regarded as variations on a single theme. For example, *Nginton ngunau, Nengkejah,* and *Nyele bemeng* performed on Day Five all aspire, notwithstanding their slightly different approaches — appeal, intimidation, prohibition — to eliminate bad influences in whatever form they might come. Like other devices of poetification characterizing *buntang*s, such redundancy is not unessential, or simply an expression of the difficulty of communication with the unseen, but an important factor contributing to make the ritual "roundabout" (*mengkelotes*), and hence authoritatively different from everyday speech or action. In addition, redundancy, another aspect of which is the simultaneous use of multiple media to express the same point (e.g. chants, music, material prestations, bodily gestures), brings about the other property to be discussed here, that is, condensation. Condensation, by which I mean the process of merging or assimilation of several different sensory or cognitive impressions into a single unitary totality, in its turn generates what we might call a heightened experience of the ritual, or in Tambiah's (1985b:165) words, a "total fused experience." This should not be taken to mean that some sort of radical change of consciousness ordinarily takes place in *buntang*s, even though the exhaustive, on average week-long event involving comparatively intense socialization, a perceived pervasive spirit presence, and little sleep, evidently is quite conducive to the occurrence of spontaneous spirit possession (occurring outside the ritual program). Rather, condensation in *buntang*s (which is facilitated also by the multifaceted redundancy of ritual language) serves most effectively to foster a sensory appropriation of what it contributes to make the most basic values, ways of acting, and ways of being associated with the ritual. Working as by way of synergy, condensation promotes an internalization of what the *buntang* stands for as ontology.

Finally, it should be noted that words have a privileged cultural status among the Bentian as well as more generally throughout southeast Borneo, a factor which contributes to make ritual language, as opposed to other ritual media, authoritative. Centuries of Muslim influence in this region (Kutai, Banjar, Bekumpai, Pasir, Bugis) have made spells and "reading" (*basa*, M. *baca*) the archetypes of magical activity, especially of magic which is not incorporated in rituals (which is in fact somewhat less prevalent among the Bentian than among many of their downriver neighbors, despite common allegations to the contrary by the latter; cf. Tsing 1993). At the same time as it has promoted formualic and esoteric forms of "knowledge" (*ilmu*), this influence, and the ideals of the Koran and recitation in Arabic associated with it, has contributed to the widespread general authority of the word in the region. Among the Bentian, the central role of chants in *belian* rituals, and the idea that they constitute their most instrumental parts, may well owe something to this influence, as may the elevated authority of the ancestral *word* already discussed. However, there probably also exists an originally indigenous basis for the Bentian belief in the denotative power of the word. Notions of

this sort, commonly expressed by Bentians, as that knowing someone's (a spirit's or human's) true or complete name involves having some power over him, or that the mentioning of something (e.g. a spirit or death) may invoke it, are common everywhere. Like curses (*sumpah*), often suggested as sources of misfortune by Bentians, such notions probably predate Muslim influence, even though some more esoteric forms of verbal magic do not. As among the Ilongot, who appear not to have been subjected to a similar influence to a similar extent, the authority of the word is to an important degree derived from an association of language (and elaborate language in particular) with the controlled and controlling agency of "seniors" (*manti* in particular among the Bentian) and the social order which they uphold, especially through formal oratory but also through informal "reconciliatory" speech (cf. M. Rosaldo 1980). Whatever the derivation of the privileged cultural status of words among the Bentian, it points to the fact that ritual language is authoritative also because of some quite different factors than its much-used poetic devices.

Belian **Authority**

A particular form of religious authority already mentioned several times is the authority of the *belian*s. I shall now discuss *belian* authority, whose display was also a concern in Ma Mar's *buntang*, especially in regard to that of its leading *belian,* Ma Putup, who laid claims to exceptional talents. Being a liturgy-centered ritual, the *buntang* does not allow for very much in the way of dramatic performance or idiosyncratic improvisation, except during the somewhat insulated curing sessions incorporated in the ritual, which may be conducted in any style, traditional or novel, and which may be developed into small rituals in their own right. However, leading a *buntang* and performing all the activities associated with it testifies to the possession of considerable knowledge (not the least, of chants), and is something of a mark of mature *belian*ship. Ma Putup, in his early sixties at the time, was, beyond anyone's doubt, widely learned, knowing, except for *buntang*s, all major curing styles (*belian luangan*, *sentiu* and *bawo*), in addition to being a *warah,* or death shaman, a somewhat rare combination. However, as an outsider, having moved to Temiang less than a year ago upon marrying Nen Bujok, he had so far only been invited to perform a few rituals in his new village, and he had not yet had the opportunity to lead a *buntang*. Despite his obvious skills, the villagers preferred, as Bentians primarily do, to turn to their own *belian*s (i.e. their own kin). Apart from his outsider status, a special reason for villagers not to employ him so much as he might have deserved, was probably a principal aspect of his *belian* reputation which made him feared, that is, his distinctive "downriver" spirit familiars and his intermittent use of their incomprehensible spirit language (allegedly Arabic) during performances. The fact that

he was unusually self-assertive, loud, and sturdy also contributed to his frightening appearance, and at least the first two of these qualities made him not conform very well to the somewhat conservative picture of *belian*ship that the villagers had.

For Kakah Unsir's family, however, holding a *buntang* provided an opportunity to advance the *belian*ship of the potentially most distinguished *belian* affiliated with the house, as it also did with respect to two other, somewhat less distinguished ones, Nen Pore's brother, Ma Kerudot, and Ma Mar's co-husband, Ma Sarakang (see Fig. 1). In a situation where fifteen of about fifty adults in the village had at least some experience of performing as *belian*s, there was, despite the fact that *belian* rituals were held in the village or its surrounding swiddens almost every week (and often several in a week), an overabundance of *belian*s, which meant that many of those who were less distinguished, or had peripheral kin network positions, were inactive for much of the time (for instance, Ma Sarakang had only twice performed in the last couple of years, in both cases in rituals arranged for his wife, Nen Pare). Competition is a factor significantly moderating the individual *belian*'s authority, which may only be persuasively demonstrated through performance, preferably frequent performance, which in itself testifies to his authority.

As for the Wana shaman, the authority of a *belian* is largely a function of the spirit familiars (*mulung*) that he is able to summon, without whom no *belian* ritual may be conducted in the first place (cf. Atkinson 1989:100). Claims on connections to such familiars — who predominantly consist of dead ancestors, particularly dead *belian*s, but who encompass practically all kinds of spirits including "malevolent ones," *blis* — is best demonstrated through ritual performance, although spontaneous possession by spirits (which mainly occurs during rituals) may also be an indication of such connections (if not yet of one's capacity to command them). An instance of spirit possession took place during Ma Mar's *buntang* when Nen Pore's older brother Ma Unsir became crazed and started talking in the voices of his personal protecting spirits (*pengiring*) who complained that the ritual paraphernalia constructed for the ritual was incomplete, and did not become placated until Ma Putup "paid respect" to them (*besemah*) by holding some offerings above Ma Unsir's head as token presentations. All people are said to have protecting spirits of their own — as do analogously houses and communities — who are not, however, regarded as spirit familiars, unless used by a *belian* in ritual (for a *belian*, the two categories may, of course, overlap). Even though not a *belian* himself, through his possession, Ma Unsir in consequence laid claims to some powerful spirit connections of his own (somewhat like Ma Putup did by becoming possessed by his spirit familiars in rituals) which would be useful should he consider taking up occupation as a *belian*.

Although spirit familiars are a prerequisite for most kinds of *belian* activity and are thus much more than guides for travels in the spirit world, the authority of *belian*s derives to an important degree also from other factors. This is especially the case in *buntang*s where all *belian*s use pretty much the same spirit familiars, particular representatives of

which are "descended" (from their heavenly abodes) to perform many of the particular activities of which the ritual consists (see Table 1). Some spirit familiars are used by all *belian*s in practically all rituals (such as *Luing*, the spirit of rice who is used to summon all other spirit familiars employed), and as a general rule, *belian*s employ most available and conceivable spirit helpers rather than rely on just a few distinctive ones.

Although there are no principal limitations on who may become a *belian* (women, for instance, are not excluded),[162] there is some clarity about who has become one. Normally, *belian*s study *belian*ship through apprenticeship to an experienced *belian* for an extended period of time, usually for about a couple of years, and conclude with formal initiation rites (*tumbang*). During this time the novice *belian* above all memorizes the chants sung in rituals (by singing along, *nuing*, in actual performances), but also learns various techniques associated with curing, including some semi-secret ones. In the concluding initiation rite certain mystical *belian* faculties are installed in the novice such as a shamanic voice, vision and senses which enable him to summon, see and catch spirits or illnesses. These faculties are represented by small objects such as grains of rice, mirror fragments, and fish hooks which are allegedly inserted into the novice's breast, forehead, and finger tips, respectively. The *belian*s' ability to perform their tasks, and their authority, is considered to derive in large part from the capacities that they acquire in the initiation rite and through the preceding training, especially from the knowledge of chants. Much more than a question of ability to demonstrate spirit connections in performance, then, *belian*ship requires a willingness to submit to long training, which is regarded as a principal reason for the diminishing popularity of *buntang*s and *belian luangan* (which are the most wordy of the *belian* rituals) among young and "busy" (*sibuk*) *belian*s today.

People may, it is true, in rare cases become regarded as *belian*s without going through the formal procedure, but instead, by receiving direct spirit guidance through dreams or during a prolonged illness associated with mental imbalance, but even then some informal study of the chants under a competent *belian* is necessary, and one's status as a *belian* may suffer from the lack of formal competence. Kakah Ramat, an over eighty years of age, but still active, *belian* who was regarded as the most competent *belian* in the village, made a distinction between *belian*s who "have spirit familiars" (*naan mulung*), meaning especially those who make a great display of their spirit connections,

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[162] Women may perform any *belian* style except *belian bawo* which is considered too strong (*gaga*), that is, too physically exhaustive, in addition to involving use of exceptionally dangerous spirit familiars. Women *belian*s are said to have been more common in the past, and there used to be a now extinct form called *belian bawe*, "women's *belian*," which only women could perform (which is not to be mixed up with a present style with the same name imported from the Tunjung, which among the Bentian at least may be performed by either men or women). Today, most women *belians* (which make up a small minority, well below ten percent) only perform *belian sentiu* or related styles (*dewa-dewa, kenyong*).

and those who, like himself, "know *belian* chants" (*tau bukun belian*), that is, who rely primarily on the efficacy of words in rituals. A special reason for the authority of *belian*s is their knowledge of chants, which despite considerable variation between *belian*s, are said to have been passed down unchanged from early ancestors and thus to represent the ancestors' words. Together with the *manti* and the *warah*, the *belian*s are regarded as the custodians of ancestral tradition and therefore generally, although not always, thought to express the will of the ancestors, which means that criticizing them should be avoided as it may amount to a criticism of the ancestors.

Despite simultaneously mastering chants and commanding plentiful spirit support — and indeed a lot of respect as a result — Ma Putup still did not enjoy very much community support for his *belian*ship in his new village. There were several reasons for this, one of which relates to the ancestral connection of *belian*s, which Ma Putup did not very persuasively demonstrate through his non-deferential manners (during Ma Mar's *buntang* he caused some annoyance by somewhat over-enthusiastically ordering people around and complaining about the ritual paraphernalia) and his obviously non-local spirit familiars (which played a lesser role in the *buntang*, however). Also, coming from another village he performed a few aspects of rituals in ways slightly but nevertheless conspicuously different from local custom. In Ma Mar's *buntang*, he brought food offerings to the *seniang* in heaven rather than inviting them to come down and receive them, and upon returning from the soul search to Mount Lumut he made a detour to bathe Ma Mar's and the other participants' souls with potent water from a well on top of another mountain, Mount Purei, a custom only associated with mortuary ceremonies in his new village. These were aspects of his performance which some of his present fellow villagers privately complained about, experiencing them as non-consonant with *their* personally lived ancestral tradition and therefore as potentially offensive to their ancestors.

Yet another aspect of Ma Putup's outsider status which helps to explain the villagers' relative disinclination to turn to him — and indirectly the general inclination of Bentians to turn to their own *belian*s — was the fact that the majority of the villagers as yet owed him nothing. An important source of the individual *belian*'s authority is what he has previously done for particular people and families in terms of *belian* services (cf. Atkinson 1989:270-74). Having saved their lives when they were ill, provided good lives and good relations for them by performing their *buntang*s, conducted their marriages and their birth rituals, and having, whether the rituals that they performed were successful or not, invested extensive effort in their well-being in return for rewards which are regarded as only nominal (e.g. a couple of dozen white plates and a few kilos of meat for a *buntang*), most people stand in a kind of informal debt relation to a smaller or greater number of *belian*s who in return can expect some degree of respect and often also some small services or gifts (such as pieces of meat from hunters), as well as invitations to

perform future rituals. It would be impolite not to invite a nearby *belian* with whom one has a long-standing relationship unless he was busy (e.g. with other rituals) or special reasons commanded a different choice (e.g. a *belian* competent in a curing style not practiced by the *belian* in question). In Temiang, where Kakah Ramat enjoyed an elevated status as the village's most senior and learned *belian* and most villagers at some point or another had been "*belian*ized" (*benelian*) by him, it was imperative to at least contact him whenever a *buntang* was held, and so an invitation was passed on to him to partake in Ma Mar's *buntang* at least in the capacity as honored guest, an invitation which he, because of his somewhat detached relationship to Kakah Unsir, would in fact have been happier not to have received, but which he still felt obliged to accept, if only for the afternoon of the ritual's last day.

The scope of a *belian'*s authority is largely a function of the number of human dependants that he is able to accumulate (the core group tends to consist of his close relatives and neighbors), a fact which at least initially restricted Ma Putup's authority as a *belian* in Temiang, at the same time as the little social capital that he had provided him with those opportunities to perform the rituals that he did get. Apart from his affiliation with Kakah Unsir's family, who because of it felt more obliged than others to employ him at the same time as they also had most to gain from his *belian*ship, two other relations were significant in this respect. First, his relation to Kakah Ramat, with whom he had asked to study, and as a result received an opportunity to perform in a few of his rituals in the capacity of (senior) disciple, and who, unlike most villagers, openly recognized Ma Putup's *belian* skills. Second, his relation to his wife Nen Bujok's and her dead sister Nen Pare's classificatory and adoptive father Ma Lombang, who was the person who had asked Ma Putup to perform Ma Mar's *buntang* and, in the capacity as *manti*, taken responsibility for its arrangement, since he regarded himself as the "trunk" or "foundation" (*puun*) of Ma Putup as well as of Ma Mar (by way of extension from Nen Bujok and Nen Pare), and therefore saw it as his task to integrate the two men (who both were originally outsiders) into the village. Thus social capital was a factor simultaneously impeding and prompting Ma Putup's *belian* career in Temiang.

In this analysis of *belian* authority, I have so far mainly examined its sources and constitution. A few words need to be said also about what it consists of, that is, about the nature of the influence that the *belian*s wield, which leads us to the question of why someone like Ma Putup or Kakah Ramat would choose to become a *belian* in the first place. In studies of Southeast Asian shamanism, this is a question which has often been answered with reference to the socially acceptable role that shamanism offers socially or psychologically deviant personalities (e.g. Bernstein 1997; Sutlive 1992), an explanation which has only a limited applicability among the Bentian where most *belian*s command considerable respect also outside of this role and do not suffer, more than others, from socio-psychological abnormalities. Other Southeast Asianists (Atkinson 1989; Tsing

1993), have answered the same question primarily with reference to various political incentives for shamanship, especially "leadership," loosely understood. Atkinson and Tsing have both studied dispersed swidden cultivators closely resembling the Bentian in terms of social organization and they both regard a pursuit of political authority and an ambition to create communities, or followings of dependants residentially concentrated around the shaman, as integral to the shamanic enterprise. Among the Bentian, I do not find that *belian* authority amounts to much political authority, or very much authority of any other sort outside the sphere of *belian*ship. There is, in fact, a negative correlation between *belian*ship on the one hand, and high *manti* status or occupation of government office such as village leadership, on the other. *Belian*s are simply too busy to lead community affairs, it is said (in contrast, the *warah*s, who are engaged in their occupation somewhat less frequently, more commonly combine their position with political office), and it seems that ambitious men vie for either religious or political authority or at least end up principally obtaining just one.[163] With regards to residential concentration of dependants, *belian*ship may perhaps be of minor benefit, although I have found no evidence that swidden clusters generally are concentrated around *belian*s (cf. Atkinson 1989:270-72), or that *belian*s are more engaged in this pervasive Bentian pursuit than other elderly men. And even though house (*lou*) leaders, who in that capacity are regarded as *manti*, quite frequently are *belian*s, they are also usually male elders, which, in this connection, matters more than *belian*ship.

However, due to knowing and mastering things which others do not know or master, *belian*s do usually enjoy some level of prestige on account of their occupation (especially, of course, if they know more than other *belian*s), which is in itself quite an important motive for *belian*ship. Because of their spirit familiars, ancestral connections, language skills, and what they have done for people, *belian*s also command at least some degree of respect, which, apart from psychological benefits, may grant them certain social advantages such as gifts, assistance or compliance from others, although not political authority. For instance, Kakah Ramat, who in addition to being a renowned *belian* was also an elder with an eminent moral reputation, commanded considerable respect, and if there were any person in the village which its two foremost *manti*, Ma Lombang and Ma Bari, would hesitate to command (*siu*) or forbid (*kelamen*) in any matter, it was Kakah Ramat.

Yet another alleged benefit of *belian*ship is that *belian*s are said to be especially desired by women, a reputation that they owe to their assumed knowledge of love magic.

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[163] Today, an additional reason for this negative correlation between *belian*ship and political office is — besides the work load and perhaps certain unexpressed notions of propriety — the fact that there is a pressure on government officials (and anyone wishing to command influence beyond the community) to convert to a government-endorsed world religion (*agama*), such as Christianity or Islam.

Their skills in magic are also said to provide them with another odd reputation, that is, one for a proficiency in sorcery. Even though *belian*s generally are expected to act unselfishly for the common good in accordance with an ideal associated with the ancestors, it is recognized that they hold through their spirit connections and knowledge of spells and esoteric techniques the power not only to protect themselves and their families, should it be needed, but also to hurt others. This is regarded as particularly true for *belian*s practicing *belian sentiu*, an increasingly popular curing style employing downriver, Kutai Malay speaking spirit familiars, which is regarded as especially effective for combatting sorcery (which is feared today except from fellow Bentians, but from recent non-Bentian migrants to the area). Rather than being something negative, however, this reputation of the *belian*s may, as Atkinson has noted for the Wana shamans (1989:274-76), actually serve their interests, by contributing (through fear of retribution) to the above-mentioned respect and favors that they tend to receive.

Even though it does not translate into very much power outside their office, the influence that the *belian*s wield in their capacity as *belian*s is considerable in itself. Having, with the *warah*s, a near monopoly on institutionalized contacts with supernatural agencies, and thus mediating most of the interaction between spirits and people, they are in an important position to influence people's lives. Rituals are commonly proposed by *belian*s, and like the *manti*, on whose initiative rituals are also frequently held, they are likely to suggest their arrangement when it lies in their own interest to do so, and may dismiss or defer them when it does not. The *belian*s also determine postritual restrictions (*pali*) which the patient and other ritual participants should observe.[164] Thus, *belian*s make an important difference in people's lives. From an emic point of view, the greatest difference that they make relates, of course, to the illnesses and misfortunes which may be cured or prevented as a result of their agency. Kaharingan Bentians take their dependence on *belian*s for granted and their mediation in various sorts of difficult situations as imperative. As among the Wana, "[t]he idea of having a loved one die without the care of a powerful shaman is grievous" (Atkinson 1989:290). And through the notions of the soul, in whose traffic the expertise of *belian*s is indispensable, a dependence on the *belian*s is, in Atkinson's (1989:119) words, "built into the very constitution of the person."

Very similar notions and conditions that relate to the *belian*s pertain also to the *warahs,* who limitations of space prevent me from considering more extensively here. The souls of dead relatives should receive the proper treatment of a *warah* (or actually

[164] Some of these post-ritual prohibitions are temporary, others permanent. Every ritual is followed by a few days-long prohibition for the patient from leaving the house where the ritual was held, and a similar or briefly longer prohibition for people not taking part in the ritual from entering the house (for the duration of which the peeled inflorescence of the areca palm, *mayang sepoon*, is hung outside the entrance of the house). Those who receive treatment are also frequently assigned special food prohibitions lasting either for their whole lives or the duration of their illness.

of several, as it takes at least two to perform a *gombok*) to insure their satisfaction in the afterlife (and thus, indirectly, their descendants well-being). Among the differences between *belian*ship and *warah*ship, the pay (*upah*) of *warah*s is somewhat higher (but their performances are also more demanding as well as more infrequent), and that a special source for their authority is their expertise on death, which others, including *belian*s, tend to be afraid to deal with, and which gives them, as spirit connections do for *belian*s, a reputation for having particular soul strength (*tokeng juus*). Like the *belian*s, the *warah*s are highly respected, perhaps slightly more so than the average *belian*. Among the Benuaq where mortuary ceremonies are more elaborate, the relative status of *warah*ship is even higher, as it is among the Ngaju, famous for their month-long *tiwah* mortuary rites, where the status difference between priests (*basir*) and shamans (*balian*) is vast (Schiller 1997). Another important source for the status and authority of the *warahs* is that they are regarded as particularly knowledgeable about ancestral tradition. Like *buntang*s, the similarly liturgy-centered *gombok*s contain extensive chant materials, which means that the *warah* must obtain considerable knowledge of chants, as well as origin stories, which are performed mainly during *gombok*s and *buntang*s. The *warahs* also have an unparalleled knowledge of the identity and kin relations of the recently dead in a community, as the deceased's dead relatives are always invited to take part in *gombok*s.

Ancestral, Object, and Protecting Spirit Authority

Most of my discussion relating to Ma Mar's *buntang* has so far concerned mainly one aspect of it, the soul retrieval attempt. Soul retrieval, however, forms only a rather small part of the *buntang*, and not a particularly characteristic part. The *buntang* is an essentially collective ritual, and that most of its activities regard thanksgiving and supplication, which in distinction to curing activities (*bekawat*), are performed less for the benefit of a particular identified patient than for the benefit of the sponsoring family as a whole. While *buntang*s usually include curing activities, they are simultaneously expected to be joyous collective festivities, particularly on the Day of Hanging up the *Ibus* Stripes, when special decorations are constructed, and important protecting spirits arrive along with the “headhunt skull” (brought from the forest where a mock headhunt is staged), as well as on the climactic final day of the ritual. On these two days the principal animal sacrifices are made and the meat served with rice in rows to the participants who at certain points in the ritual program start “yelling and yodelling” (*nyelele nyelayau*), crying out in penetrating voices said to signify the festive mood that

should ideally prevail.[165] From the Day of Hanging up the *Ibus* Stripes onward, collective ritual action involving a greater or lesser number of the participants (expressing their support for the patient and/or the sponsoring family) also occupies a prominent place in the program activities. During this second part of the ritual, the *manti* of the house is also likely to give one or several speeches (prior to some of the main collective meals and/or in connection with the distribution of plates as rewards for ritual work at the conclusion of the ritual) in which he thanks the participants for their assistance.

In the remaining part of the chapter I will focus on some aspects of religious authority whose significance in the *buntang* reflects particularly its collective orientation and its concerns with thanksgiving and supplication. These are the complexly interconnected authorities of the ancestors, the protecting spirits, and the various objects used in the ritual. The ancestors have already received much consideration in this chapter, but mostly in their malevolent aspect rather than in their capacity as benefactors. Apart from being protecting spirits addressed with offerings and appeals in the *buntang*, Bentians regard them as the source of most that they know. Had it not been for the ancestors, typically referred to as an anonymous collectivity by the term *ulun tuha one*, "the elders of bygone days,"[166] people would not be who they are today, is a basic tenet repeatedly expressed in various formal and informal circumstances. The ancestors, or ancestral origin/precedence, is also the single most referred to source of legitimation for various kinds of action and states of affairs in everyday discourse. This holds true for most everything conceived as indigenous (e.g. agricultural practices) and especially for customary law and ritual. When asked about the significance or purpose of a particular ritual practice, Bentians typically point to its ancestral origin as its sole or ultimate meaning.

The importance of the ancestors is closely connected with a fundamental Bentian notion that the origin (*asar*) of practices and things has to be traced back or at least recognized in order to enable their proper use or appropriation. This notion is exemplified

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[165] Also indicating the ideally festive character of the ritual, *buntang*s were formerly associated with drinking and various special games. Interestingly, Bentians used to drink alcohol (*tuak*, fermented sugar palm wine) on festive occasions, particularly *buntang*s, but stopped drinking altogether some time in the early part of the twentieth century, allegedly because of the evidenced disadvantages of alcohol (especially fights). Similarly, various indigenous games used to be played in connection with rituals but have today become obsolete or rare (an exception is some of the games played as amusement for the souls of the dead during secondary mortuary rituals), as is the case with some genres of music and song performed outside the context of ritual. What this indicates is that what we could call Bentian "secular culture" generally has witnessed a degree of atrophication during the last couple of centuries, at the same time as ritual traditions not only persist, but even appear to have diversified in the same period.

[166] It should be recognized here that I owe my translation of *ulun tuha one* as "the elders of bygone days" to Briggs (1988:327) who uses this formulation to translate a concept used by the Chiapas of Mexico to designate their ancestors.

by various events and conventions,[167] but perhaps most prominently by the mandatory recitation in grander rituals of *tempuun* recounting the origins of the sacrificial animals and plants used as construction materials for the ritual paraphernalia, a practice whose ancestral orientation is reflected by the anthropomorpic origins of these animals and plants[168] and the ancestral origins of their use in ritual (also recounted in the *tempuun*), as well as by the fact that the activity takes place by the *longan*. The notion is also exemplified by the already mentioned concept of *puun* (from which the word *tempuun* is derived) which, besides tree trunks, designates individuals, groups or houses standing in a position to others as trunks to branches (*pakaak*) or tips (*lai*), that is, in a founding relationship. Indicating the social implications of such a position, *puun* is also a verb meaning "to own" or "take responsibility over." The authority of both the ancestors and the elders is to an important degree justified by the notion of *puun*.

The recitation of *tempuun* can also be taken to indicate the fundamental importance of material prestations and certain objects in ritual, without which rituals would be, as Bentians see it, hopelessly incomplete. While chants generally are considered to be the most instrumental aspect of ritual action, the material setup of rituals is regarded as absolutely indispensable for most kinds of ritual action performed. For non-*belian*s, the animal sacrifices and ritual paraphernalia are usually also the subject of much greater concern and explicit discussion than the words of the chants (which in performances often are barely audible), reflecting the recognized expertise of *belian*s with respect to the chants, and the greater conspicuousness to the participants of the sacrifices and ritual paraphernalia in performance, but also the considerable expenditures and workload which the animal sacrifices and making the ritual paraphernalia frequently involve. However, it is not only certain major, performatively prominent material ingredients of ritual, such as the sacrificial animals or the *longan*, that have such importance. Indeed, the same often goes for many less salient material aspects of ritual, some of which may in fact be absolutely crucial, as was demonstrated during the drought of the swidden year of 1997-98, when thick smoke from Bornean forest fires enveloped much of Southeast Asia, and the resulting shortage of sticky rice (*pulut*), which is a basic ingredient of the inconspicuous food offerings (*okan penyewaka*) used in "paying respect" (*besemah*) to

[167] The fact that people in some villages in connection with the initiation of rattan cultivation in the nineteenth century brought rattan seeds from Pasir (rather than take them from plants in the forest) for the reason that rattan cultivation originated there, represents a striking illustration of this notion. Other, somewhat more prosaic examples are the recitation by the *warah* in ritual of lines of past teachers allegedly going back to the first *warah* that practiced *gombok*, and the recitation of genealogies of spirits in various contexts of rituals.

[168] Like much mythology elsewhere in Southeast Asia (cf. Endicott 1970; Gibson 1986; Smedahl 1989:54-58), the Luangan *tempuun* postulates an anthropomorphic origin for most things in the world. In these stories, the entities whose origins are related came in most cases into existence as a result of the transformation of particular ancestors into them upon death.

spirits in all rituals, almost completely prevented rituals from being held in many Bentian villages.[169] The Bentian also seem to be particularly rigid concerning the ritual paraphernalia in comparison with many of their neighbors among whom rituals in this respect often have become significantly downscaled. Some ritual objects that they use — e.g. the ancestor skulls and the headhunt skull — are used despite a stigma of primitiveness being attached to this use. Obviously, ritual objects have a significance which makes it difficult to do without them (or even to replace them with substitutes). What is it about objects which makes them so important? Why this essentiality of material mediation in ritual?[170] Addressing these questions can tell us something about why ritual objects are authoritative, as well as what kinds of authority they transmit.

Before proceeding, it is essential to first recognize that there are many types of objects used in rituals and that their use may be authoritative for quite different reasons. Furthermore, some of these objects are attributed with values which make them

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[169] I was told that spirits can simply not be contacted without these offerings, and that the latter may not be replaced by any substitutes. In addition to the shortage of sticky rice, a scarcity of ordinary rice also contributed to the absence of rituals at the time. Because of the extreme drought, few Bentians were able to obtain any rice whatsoever from the harvest in 1998. Even though most people managed to buy most of the ordinary rice that they needed for household consumption from outsiders (in distinction to sticky rice, which was generally unavailable for sale), they were unable or unwilling to obtain the amounts required to feed the participants in larger rituals. The fact that very few rituals were held in the period becomes especially remarkable if we consider that in many villages, in an ordinary year, hardly a week goes by without some ritual being held.

[170] One explanation for the need of material mediation in ritual was already suggested by the Dutch colonial officer Jacob Mallinckrodt (1974 [1925]) with respect to the Lawangan of the middle Barito (a Luangan subgroup related to the Bentian), among whom the millenarian *Nyuli* movement held sway in the early 1920's. As the principal reason why this movement developed among the Lawangan rather than among their Ma'anyan and Ngaju neighbors, Mallinckrodt proposed a greater ancestral orientation and less developed religious beliefs and institutions on the part of the Lawangan which he argued made them more strongly compelled to comply with precedent and thus less prepared to adapt to the social changes imposed by the Dutch at the time (settlement in nucleated villages, taxation, forced participation in road construction projects). He then illustrated both these features of Lawangan religion with an alleged dependence among the Lawangan on what I have here called "material mediation," especially by the mandatory use, as a means of contacting spirits, of ancestor skulls and other "fetishes" (such as the bamboo figurines referred to in Ma Putup's chant). In so doing, Mallinckrodt essentially meant to suggest that the religious beliefs of the Lawangan were on a lower evolutionary level than that of their neighbors, and that their inclination for material mediation was a reflection of this. In contrast to Mallinckrodt, I will not be concerned with understanding Luangan material mediation in ritual as an expression of primitiveness. Some of Mallinckrodt's observations regarding the Lawangan, on which he based his arguments, notably also appear to have been invalid in the first place. For example, he claimed that the Lawangan recognized only one kind of "higher beings," known collectively as *duwata/dewata*, among whom no division of labor existed, and that religious specialization among the Lawangan was only rudimentary, all claims that are contested by information that I have received from present-day Lawangan informants who described Lawangan religious beliefs and practices as essentially similar to that of other Luangans. Also, his suggestion that the Lawangan used "fetishes" only for mediation (in contrast to people on a higher evolutionary stage among whom they had also acquired the function of protection) lacks grounds. Among Luangans, skulls and material objects are, as we shall see, associated with protecting spirits (*pengiring*) as a result of which they indeed have a protective function.

authoritative in themselves, so to speak, whereas others are not associated with any such values, even though their use nevertheless may be essential. The first category mainly consists of relatively enduring objects, mostly what I have called ancestral objects, while the other is predominantly represented by various more or less impermanent ritual paraphernalia — most of which are constructed anew for every ritual, and typically discarded afterwards — as well as by the similarly non-enduring sacrificial animals. Characteristic for *buntang*s is that a particularly large number of both enduring and impermanent material items have to be assembled.

Basically, the authority of ritual (and other) objects reflects, I propose, the importance of reciprocity discussed earlier. Ritual objects are authoritative because they have a special capacity to index relationships in which some of the actors represent givers, others receivers. This is basically a function of their sensate substantiality and autonomy with respect to people (and spirits) which makes them particularly well adapted to serve simultaneously as extensions of and mediators between them. Furthermore, it is, in some societies at least, including the one considered here, somewhat difficult to maintain in the long run an important relationship without exchanging anything substantial, that is, either objects or services (in contrast to just words), and the same principle evidently applies, assumingly by way of extension, to Bentian relations with spirits as well. Significantly, Bentians refer to rituals as "work" (*awing*) connoting the fact that they represent services and prestations to spirits and demand expenditures and efforts from the people. It seems it would also be less plausible to expect something substantial in return from the spirits — and that is arguably why Bentians most basically enact rituals — if nothing of the kind was first offered to them. Thus, despite the declared instrumentality of chants, there is clearly a limit to how far rituals can rely on words alone. Objects are needed to complement or substantiate words as is indicated by the fact that *besemah,* or the paying of respect to spirits, may not be carried out before the appropriate offerings have been made ready (e.g. on the first night of hastily initiated curing rituals). In other words, it is clear that objects, as a category of phenomena, possess a particular and distinct authority among the Bentian, comparable to, but slightly distinct from, that of words. Both words and objects are obviously seen as essential to ritual; words especially in being regarded as what is instrumental, objects in particular in being regarded as a kind of necessary foundation.

All objects used in rituals do not represent offerings in a strict sense. Many elements, like the *ibus* stripes which are dyed in red and yellow and suspended on a rattan vine (*uen awoi*) intersecting the length of the house where a *buntang* is held, serve primarily to decorate and mark the ritual setting, or frame particular activities in it. However, like the various spirit houses accommodating rice paste figurines (some representing the senders, some the receivers), or like the ritual work itself, such elements are nonetheless explicitly dedicated to the spirits and thus actively fulfil the representing-mediating function

described here. Yet other ritual objects, that is, the so-called ancestral objects (*pusaka*), are objects which may in fact be categorized as being exempted from exchange.[171] Nevertheless, these objects, which are the most authoritative of all ritual objects, also signify as well as mediate a relationship, indeed, a relationship of a particularly valuable kind.

I shall say a few words about the ancestral objects which, unlike other ritual objects, can be seen to constitute sources of authority in their own right. This is the result of the fact that they are considered to be equipped with a capacity to engender what in the literature has commonly been referred to as potency (e.g. Errington 1989; Kirsch 1973), understood here as an inherent ability to generate, by way of mystical means, a general well-being, associated with such elementary values as health, fertility and prosperity. Storing (*ngona*) the ancestral objects is therefore regarded as beneficent, although one should regularly feed them during *buntang*s with blood from the sacrificial animals in order to realize this beneficent potential. One reason for the authority of these objects is their association with the ancestors. Being manufactured, found, procured or used by the ancestors, or even corporeally part of them, these objects — including the *longan*, the ancestor skulls and such things as tiger teeth (*belin timang*), pearls (*manik, lemiang*) and strangely shaped stones and wood — typically represent the ancestors both iconically and metonymically. In a sense they thereby also represent, if we are to accept Godelier's (1999) analysis of similarly used and valued ancestral objects in other societies, "the sacred," understood as "a relationship humans entertain with origins, with the origins of themselves as well as of everything around them" (1999:179). Imposing a "primordial debt" on the living and disguising the fact that it is they who produce the society in which they live, this relationship glorifies and exteriorizes, and thus makes unassailable to critique what Durkheim (e.g. 1995[1912]:16) called "the authority of society." It is this authority which is reflected in the ancestral object, which in Godelier's words forms a "*visible synthesis* of everything a society wants to present *and* to conceal concerning itself" (1999:174, orig. italics).

Even though the association of the ancestral objects with the ancestors explains much of the authority of the former, and some of the latter, the principal reason, as Bentians see it, for the *potency* of the ancestral objects is not this association. To a higher degree this property of these objects instead reflects their more direct and spatio-temporally unmediated association with certain protecting spirits who are believed to animate or

[171] The ancestral objects should be distinguished from what might be called ancestral valuables like gongs, old Chinese jars which are used as payment in customary law exchanges (e.g. as fines or marriage payments). Many ancestral objects such as stones and pieces of wood, the ancestor skulls, and the *longan* have of course never been part of such exchanges and have no recognized value in them. However, some objects, like pearls and tiger teeth, have been acquired in trade and it is also perfectly possible for an ancestral valuable such as a gong to become an ancestral object, if someone starts to use it as such in ritual, and it is withdrawn from exchange.

reside by them. A most basic quality of ritual objects in general (including the sacrificial animals) is that they are not mere objects, but are associated with unseen agencies (spirits) or other invisible aspects or counterparts ("souls"). This imaginary aspect of these objects is absolutely vital, and at least with regards to the spiritual agencies associated with ancestral objects, which were often described to me as *ajaib* (I. miraculous), I would be inclined to agree with Godelier that "the symbolic is indeed 'preceded' by the imaginary" (1999:123), and that "spirits of things" of the kind that we have discussed here, contrary to what Lévi-Strauss argued for *hau* and *mana*, are not empty signifiers "in [themselves] devoid of meaning, and thus capable of receiving any meaning at all," but, instead, fundamentally connected to a primary (imaginary) signified (Levi-Strauss 1987b:55, quoted in Godelier 1999:18). Thus the protecting spirits associated with the ancestral objects, for example, are not only symbols of ancestral authority but regarded as subjects from whose agencies the potency associated with these objects stem. True, some *kelelungan* are counted among these protecting spirits; more precisely, the ancestor skulls are associated with the *kelelungan* of those persons to whom they once belonged. To that extent the ancestors are also directly responsible for the well-being that tending these objects may confer. However, in so far that they are, it is obviously not in their symbolic capacity, but in their capacity of being emically "real" or, perhaps rather, "super-real."

More important than the *kelelungan*, however, are the *naiyu*, a heterogenous category of protecting spirits sometimes taking human form, sometimes reptilian (e.g. as huge pythons or as house lizards). It is above all with these beings that the ancestor skulls, the *longan*, as well as most other ancestral objects are associated (it is, for instance, these spirits that the anthropomorphically carved upper ends of the ironwood poles which make up the legs of the *longan* represent). A principal property of the *naiyu* is their desire for blood, and it is the practice of anointing the ancestral objects with this substance which is said to be what attracts *naiyu* to them. This is also true for the potent headhunt skull (which significantly is not counted among the ancestral objects, even though it, in one sense, represents one), although in this case the original bloodshed associated with its acquisition provides an even more important reason for its association with these spirits. In addition to ritual objects, the *naiyu* are also associated with special places in nature (mountaintops, headwaters, waterfalls, etc.) where potency and a strong soul may be acquired. In fact, the *naiyu* — whose voice thunder is said to be — are essentially associated with potency, so much so that if an object is potent, it can be said to "have *naiyu*" (*naan naiyu*) even if that would be so only because of being associated with some other spiritual agency. In a sense, the *naiyu are* potency, and it is for this reason at least as much as for protection that people and communities attempt to attract them as personal or communal protecting spirits, or temporarily tap their potency by cultivating good relations with them through rituals.

Potency, Concentration, and Social Oneness

As among other Southeast Asians, concentrating potency is an important cultural institution in Bentian society. However, rather than being envisioned as an all-pervading "cosmic energy" of the kind described for the South Sulawesians by Errington (1989) or the Javanese by Anderson (1972) and Keeler (1987), potency among the Bentian mainly comes in the more concrete form of endless numbers of *naiyu* and other protecting spirits. In further contrast to these people, the Bentian pursuit of potency is an almost exclusively ritual and predominantly collectively organized pursuit, generally less esoteric in character. To a very high degree, it is concurrent with the supplication activities performed as part of *buntang*s and (to a lesser degree) other rituals. The objective of these activities is to obtain potency by cultivating good relations with the spirits, particularly the protecting spirits (*pengiring*). Similarly, if anything concrete was obtained through the apparently rare instances of Bentian headhunting, it was *naiyu*, rather than the by now infamous category of "soul stuff" (*zielestof*) devised by Adriani Kruyt (1906). Indeed, it is doubtful if we can talk about accumulation of soul among the Bentian. Unlike among the ToLuwu studied by Errington, where *sumange'* denotes not only the soul, but also a widely disseminated potent energy, associated, unevenly, with people as well as objects, and constantly transferred between them, the Bentian concept of *juus* covers only "the soul," not potency. There is, for instance, no *juus* concentrated in the *longan*, where the concentration of powerful *naiyu*, however, is the strongest, just as that of *sumange'*, in South Sulawesi, is densest in the royal regalia. The soul can admittedly be hardened by various events or activities, as it may be weakened or lost as a result of others. And the state of the soul may be affected by the protecting influence of the protecting spirits. In that respect there is a connection between souls and potency, albeit a less straightforward one than there appears to be in the more potency obsessed (and hierarchic) state societies of the region.

Despite the differences, however, there are also some obvious similarities with regards to potency and concentration between these societies, on the one hand, and the Bentians, on the other, similarities to which the enigmatic *longan* in particular bears witness. One such similarity is represented by the notion of some sort of a center, within society, that represents a principal source of (endogenous) authority (the ruler and the regalia in the former case). Establishing such a center is precisely what "erecting the *longan*" is all about. Holding a *buntang* amounts to constructing a temporary center of activity (e.g. a house, ideally a *lou*) where invited people and spirits gather. Within this ritual space the *longan* represents the inner center, the place where most of the most central ritual activity takes place, and where most of the most potent spirits congregate, who are either spirits of the ancestors (including the *belian*s' spirit familiars) or highly authoritative heavenly spirits originating as ancestors (including some heavenly *naiyu* and

the above-mentioned *seniang*), or spirits of the house and its *sacra*, in other words, spirits who in some sense or another represent the local, the domestic or the indigenous (by contrast, forest and other foreign spirits, including those of the headhunt skull, tend to be addressed at the threshold of the main door, or, if suspected of soul theft, by the patient).

Thus potency, which as this indicates is predominantly endogenous,[172] is quite literally concentrated in *buntang*s. But even when *buntang*s are not held, the *longan*, as a symbol of identification for a housegroup and its continuity with the past, represents a node of spatio-temporal unification. As such it reflects a basic aspiration in society, that of being united with one's relatives and preferably also residentially concentrated with them under one roof, an aspiration which is particularly close at heart to the *manti*, but which to some degree concerns all people (at least to the point that everyone would probably subscribe to it in theory). This aspiration, represented also by the physical form of the *longan*, (i.e. by the connection of its legs at the base) is counteracted by countless centrifugal tendencies beginning from swidden cultivation and marriage, but it forms nevertheless a preeminent moral ideal in Bentian society of the same order as that of not breaking one's ties. Its attainment, along with such things as prosperity and many children, also constitutes a goal in itself, indexing socio-material well-being. In so far as concentration takes place, as it ideally should, in a *lou*, accomplishing it conforms to what Errington calls "centeredness," a state which she sees as "ultimately moral as well as practical and beneficial, for to be close to the center is to be close to the ancestral potency that brings peace, fertility, safety, and effectiveness to the world" (1989:139). Concentration need not, however, be localized at a center to be beneficial, although it is likely to be more beneficial if it is. As among the Ilongot, gathering together (*berinuk, bekekoke*) is intimately associated with obtaining strength, and it provides a standard means of "confronting external threats and unexpected afflictions" as numerous traditional narratives bear out (Rosaldo 1980:121).

In order to illustrate the supplication process among the Bentian and the importance of concentration in it I have included an excerpt from a chant from Ma Mar's ritual which was presented by Ma Putup on the ritual's final evening in connection with *Makan aning*, Offering Cooked Food to the Clean Ones, a supplicatory activity addressing the *kelelungan* together with the *seniang*, both of whom, in authoritative distinction to other protecting spirits, only accept cooked food offerings. Chants with rather similar contents

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[172] This observation contests, we may note, Errington's statement that "[t]he political geography that potency constructs for [Southeast Asian] hill-tribes is an outward-looking one" (1989:300). Even though much authority in Bentian society, as we shall see in the next chapter, is exogenous, at least as much is internal and conceived to be so. Similarly, against this background, Atkinson's (1989:226) analogous characterization of shamans as people who concentrate exogenous authority for the benefit of the community appears somewhat problematic if applied to the Bentian case. Despite their position at the periphery of the Southeast Asian state, the Bentian regard themselves as occupying centers of their own, including both their family *lou* which represents their personal source of ancestral authority and the central Luangan area which represents the collective source of indigenous tradition.

were delivered in connection with *Ngulas pusaka*, Anointing the ancestral objects with blood, and *Makan utek layau,* Feeding the headhunt skull, when favors of the same type were requested from other protecting spirits (principally *naiyu*) with different dietary predilections. The appeals made in the chant are notably expressed in botanical and zoological metaphors but they concern, of course, people. As is typical, they are preceded by a characteristically elaborate description of the offerings (in this case, cooked food) the elaborateness of which may perhaps be taken to indicate, besides an aspiration to poeticize, the importance of their substantiality.

Offering Cooked Food to the Refined Ones

1 receive the rice served in rows
2 accept the accompanying side dishes
3 delicious meat and tasty vegetables
4 together with the heart of the fat cucumber [domestic pig]
5 the liver of the wildboar fostered [domestic pig]
6 chicken feet bowed like the *puai* plant
7 jawbones like open fishing sieves
8 tails ramifying like the *potai* tree
9 heads in segments like durian fruits split open
10 flat thighs like blades of axes
11 ribs like the splinters of basketwork
12 oooo-aaah-eee-eee
13 as an ending to the booms of drums
14 finishing the clink of the gamelan
15 as an ending to the merry clamor
16 finishing the jocular singing
17 on this particular evening
18 as a conclusion to the purchase of souls
19 finishing the exchange of life forces
20 reporting requests addressed to you
21 accounting appeals swiftly delivered
22 addressing you *kelelungan* souls
23 you the clean ones
24 *Olo Seniang Bulan* [different *seniang*, as in lines 25-28)
25 *Itah Seniang Otur*
26 *Kawit Seniang Kengkeng*
27 *Baritu Ebok Jangking*
28 *Seniang Samat Sahut*
29 as a sign that we ask for the patient to recover
30 wish for the illness to heal
31 for the souls to return,
32 the life forces to come back
33 that we want to get stronger and still stronger

34 want to get taller and yet taller
35 ask for you to erect the bodily hairs
36 ask for you to harden the spurs
37 that the *ali* fish become many, the *ruai* fish numerous
38 everyone becomes old, lives a long life
39 all the women become vigorous like rattan
40 all the young men vigorous like the *manau* rattan
41 their children fine and healthy
42 the *ali* [fish] gather many in one place
43 the *ruai* [fish] gather many in one house
44 the stems of the *betung* [bamboo] form arches
45 the *balo* [bamboo] grows in clumps
46 the trunks of the *lenayup* [tree] amass
47 the trunks of the *semeluang* [tree] throng
48 ask for the strangler fig to branch profusely
49 the *nansang* [tree] to extend its branches
50 beginning from now on
51 continuing hereafter
52 let everyone become old, live a long life
53 all the women become vigorous like rattan
54 all the young men vigorous like the *manau* rattan
55 their children fine and healthy

A special reason for the positive value attributed to social concentration is that it is closely connected with social concord, which in its turn is conversely associated with supernatural danger, described in terms of "heat" (*layeng*), soul weakness, and susceptibility to spirit attack. Socially confrontative or otherwise sensitive action is often regarded as very dangerous in these terms among the Bentian, typically not only for the offenders but also for any people affected (for which reason one may, for instance, be fined simply for arguing in someone else's house, an offence called *turak daya*, "splattering blood"). By contrast, social concentration, which like "ancestral language" is above all the business of senior men, holds the potential of bringing health, prosperity and strength, all things which one hopes to receive through supplication addressing the spirits.

Social oneness is thus a fundamental quality of concentration, just as it is a basic goal of the *buntang*. This oneness is reflected not the least in the formats of the chants and other ritual action, which almost exclusively can be categorized as monological in character (this observation parallels that of Kuipers [1990:137-166] who found monologue to prevail in a category of Weyewa rituals which he calls "rites of fulfilment"). Just like expressions of dissension, dialogue is virtually absent from the official program of the ritual, whether referring to the *belian* chants or the speeches of the *manti*. The *belian* speaks *in* the voice of the ancestors, and he speaks *for* an ostensibly undivided community, as one for all. Perhaps nowhere in the ritual is this constellation

clearer than when he is left to himself reciting origin stories by the *longan*, the central point of articulation in the ritual, reduced to a deferent and unassertive embodiment of his role, simultaneously representing both. Whatever cleavages and animosity there may be in the sponsoring family or the audience more generally, they are treated as if they did not exist. In a sense, there is also no proper negotiation taking place: the spirits are offered and the spirits receive, the participants give and the participants receive (however, what each party "really" receives is an altogether different matter, determinable only at a later stage). What holding a *buntang* in a very basic sense comes down to is making an abstract statement of unity, and submitting people and spirits, everyone invited, to this statement, without really giving them a chance to contest it, at least not within the official program of the ritual (possessions, absences and the like, however, may express contestation outside it). It is the show of the sponsoring family, nevertheless, and it is they who are recognized to stand to benefit most from the ritual, just as it is they who pay. Even though the official goal of the ritual is the cultivation of the sponsoring family's relations, by placing them at the center it also conspicuously attests to their existence as a distinct and semi-autonomous social entity. Needless to say, this fact is often an important consideration when *buntang*s are arranged, even though considerations of this kind, because of their potentially divisive implications, tend to remain outside the ritual's official, relation-affirming agenda.

In Ma Mar's *buntang*, social concentration was also relevant, on several different levels. As already indicated, various social concerns were highly significant for this particular *buntang*, as they usually are. Foremost was the consecration of the new family constellation of the sponsors, and its ritual recognition was deemed essential not only to ensure good relations with the spirits — among whom the protecting spirits of Kakah Unsir's house and the recently dead ancestors of the family were especially relevant in this respect — but also with the living members of Kakah Unsir's family, including, in particular, Nen Pore's brothers Ma Kerudot and Ma Unsir who mainly stayed out on their swiddens and appeared somewhat disengaged with their source family, maintaining stronger connections with their wife's and children's families, respectively, both of whom lived in other villages. Strengthening the internal cohesion of the housegroup was also a general concern addressed by the *buntang*, desired in particular by Kakah Unsir who wanted to see his children and grandchildren (*anak opo*) unified in his house in a collective effort serving to enhance the welfare of all and that of Ma Mar more particularly, as well as that of Kakah Unsir himself (whose eyesight and body aches were, as said, tended to in the ritual).

In addition to these principally internal social concerns of the family, there were also a number of more external ones, for which relations beyond it were crucial. As I mentioned earlier, the status of Kakah Unsir's housegroup as one of the four principal kin categories in the village and its somewhat strained relation to the other ones were

important social concerns addressed by the ritual. With respect to these matters, the concrete participation of those associated with the group, but also of others recognizably not, formed essential objectives of the ritual. The people of Kakah Unsir's house and those of Ma Mar's (who, after Ma Mar had moved in with Nen Pore, had become even more integrated than before) were relatively poor as well as somewhat low-ranking socio-morally (not the least because of their internal marriages), and they had a reputation of sticking to themselves and not sufficiently contributing to common village affairs. Kakah Unsir as the principal elder and only self-confessing *manti* of the two houses was regarded as "crazy" (*kuto*), and his loud and persistent claim to descendence from a past leader said to have founded the village was ridiculed.

Against this background, the arrangement of Ma Mar's *buntang* formed a complex socio-political statement regarding Kakah Unsir's housegroup and its relation to the rest of the village. It aimed to manifest their status as a discrete social entity worthy of others' respect and endowed with the capacity to mobilize both the economic and social resources necessary to hold a *buntang*, at the same time as it sought to improve their deteriorated relations with the rest of the village. Despite their detachment, most people in Kakah Unsir's downriver part of the village were, in fact, united with the rest of it in sharing a common concern for the integrity of the (unofficial) village as a whole as well as by an ambition to once again become independent from the neighboring village of Datai Munte to which it now administratively belonged (they had already once succeeded in this, but then lost their autonomy again). Significantly, there was one person who actively functioned as an unifying link between the two village parts (which were separated by a tiny brook), namely, Ma Lombang, the *manti* who arranged Kakah Unsir's ritual as well as delivered the speeches given during it. A younger brother of Nen Pare's and Nen Bujok's father who had been a village leader of Temiang while it was still independent, and a vigorous *manti* himself, Ma Lombang had a personal interest in arranging Ma Mar's *buntang* (such things being what the *manti* characteristically do) just as he had in defining himself as the "trunk" or "owner" (*puun*) of his nieces and their husbands (Ma Mar and Ma Putup) and thereby assuming responsibility for them (taking responsibility or *bertanggung jawab*, I., being a paradigmatic *manti* activity, especially under the influence of New Order rhetoric). However, he was also playing out a "community agenda," one which made participation in Ma Mar's *buntang* politically motivated, in addition to being morally obligating (which ritual participation, as relation-affirming and relation-supportive behavior, always to some degree is, lesser or greater depending on the closeness of one's relation to the sponsors and the gravity of the potential obstacles, *aur*, that might cause one not to participate).

Despite these important incentives for participation in the ritual, however, Ma Mar's *buntang* was a rather small one. It succeeded in gathering the family (i.e. the people of Kakah Unsir's and Ma Mar's houses) but participation beyond the family was quite

meagre, a fact reflecting the usual absence of this ritual's sponsors from the rituals of other villagers. There was a sense that the ritual was not really a success in this respect, a sense which permeated the atmosphere which was not very festive and fraught with irritation among the sponsors. Contributing to this sense was the compromised participation of those people whose presence was most desired in this respect, the village's foremost *belian,* Kakah Ramat, and its foremost *manti,* Ma Bari, who only took part for one and two evenings, respectively. Making his appearance on the ritual's fourth night, Ma Bari, who privately complained about the participation pressure, excused himself for not having appeared earlier by referring to a kerosene lamp that had suddenly gone out, an incident interpreted as an inauspicious sign preventing him from leaving his house which would, however, quite likely have been ignored under other circumstances. As this incident indicates, there are limits to what ritualization can do, and religious authority (in this case in the form of an omen) may even be used against those relation-affirming purposes for which it is usually and ostensibly put into use. Nevertheless, the same integrative aspirations and ideological praise of collective values to which kinship was seen to add up are clearly fundamental in the religious realm, and it is perhaps especially along those lines that we should pursue the significance of the *buntang* and of Bentian religious authority more generally.

Conclusion: Ritualization as Authorization

In this chapter I have been looking at some rather diverse aspects of religious authority (authority pertaining to or deriving from relations with supernatural agencies), including *belian* authority, ancestral authority, various sorts of spirit authority, and the authority of the special language and objects used in ritual. Common to all these varieties of Bentian religious authority is that ritual is the medium through which they are predominantly expressed, as well as through which people purposively put them into use through ritualization, that is, by arranging a ritual in response to some perceived problem or other concern frequently having supernatural as well as social ramifications. In order to approach Bentian religious authority in action, I have analyzed a particular kind of ritual, the *buntang*, and as an illustration of the *buntang*, a particular instance of it. This undertaking first led me to describe the remarkable complexity of this multiprogram and multipurpose ritual as a kind of groundwork serving to facilitate a more thorough analysis of the incentives and implications of arranging such rituals. Since ritualization itself forms an important strategy of authorization, two principal concerns that I have had in analyzing the *buntang* have been with what, more exactly, it is that ritualization does in this case, and why it is authoritative.

Beginning with what ritualization does, I proposed that one of its most fundamental effects is the translation or reformulation of whatever concerns that motivated it (illness, farming conditions, social problems) into a discourse of souls and spirits. There are many important implications of this process which characterizes not only the *buntang* but also all other religious rituals performed by Bentians. One such implication is that it contributes to a process of entextualization — also brought about by various aspects of formalization, including formalized ritual language — identifying particular rituals as instances of ancestral tradition, and thereby imbuing the performance with the authority of that rather sacrosanct institution, the importance of which the particular ritual simultaneously serves to confirm. Another is that it enables indirect or implicit address of sensitive issues, especially various social concerns, which as a rule receive almost no explicit consideration in the ritual. Going hand in hand — especially in the *buntang* — with what I have termed an "anonymization" of the people and conditions which the ritual addresses, the translation into soul and spirit discourse effects a thorough displacement of the original concerns, a fact which entails that it is actually inappropriate, strictly speaking, to refer to this process as translation: what takes place in the ritual does not have such a straightforward relation to what it responds to. As Bell has eloquently argued, "[p]eople do not take a social problem to ritual for solution." Instead, "[p]eople generate a ritualized environment that acts to shift the very status and nature of the problem into terms that are endlessly retranslated in strings of deferred schemes" (1992:106). This characterization of what ritualization involves is apt also for purposes of describing the *buntang*, especially if we consider the extensive redundancy characterizing this ritual, in which a majority of the program activities form primarily so many variations on one or another of its basic themes — thanksgiving, supplication, curing — adding up to a complexly ramifying traditional statement of a much more generalized kind than the concerns which occasioned it, but which may nevertheless, as we have seen, be quite complex and ramifying themselves.

Thus ritualization in the case of the *buntang* has the effect of, in a sense, creating a world apart, a world in which the dominant mode of communication is performative (illocutionary), rather than referential (locutionary) or instrumental (perlocutionary). What is stated in the ritual is not direct expressions of what people believe, think or feel, but rather, conventionalized restatements, or, in Tambiah's (1985b:132) words, "stereotyped conventions...[which] act at a second or further remove...[and] code not intentions but 'simulations' of intentions." It is, in fact, very much from the fact that they themselves represent such conventional actions, and thus reenactments of ancestral tradition, that *buntang*s basically derive their remarkable capacity for authorization, including even authorization of conditions violating the principles of that same tradition such as non-marital sexual relations or parallel cousin marriage.

Through ritualization, individual voices and individual fates are cast in a common collective mould, as when women cry at funerals, wailing loudly according to a highly stylized, formalized pattern, or when *buntang* participants — dedicating the sacrificial animals to the spirits — throw pig bristles and chicken feathers over their heads with a characteristic wrench of their wrist. This does not mean that important personal concerns and intense emotions may not be behind such conventional action, despite the nonindividual (traditional) expressions that they may appear to take. Similarly, while distanced in a sense, the *buntang* is in many respects intensely engaged with the everyday world. For instance, its performative orientation reflects a vitally existential concern, namely, that of obtaining some measure of what I have called existential or performative control, that is, a degree of certitude with respect to where things stand and what to do, a condition which is in fact especially important in situations when there are few or no courses of instrumental action available to the actor to improve his predicament — situations in which rituals may be more useful than science (Jackson:1998:23-24).

The logic of the "drama" of soul and spirit discourse is also taken from everyday life. Being basically about obligations to, and exchange with spirits, the *buntang* mirrors — and reinforces — the significance of these phenomena in the social world. The latter is also concretely present in the ritual and addressing it is something which arranging a *buntang* necessarily does already by the fact that locals cannot avoid hearing about it and, given the great value of ritual participation, respond by either attending or (conspicuously) not attending. Something which ritualization in the case of the *buntang* in a very concrete sense does is effect some degree of social concentration — of the host family as well as of the guests — and this, too, is a recognized general objective of the *buntang*, providing a means to obtain well-being, including further social concentration beyond the ritual occasion. Thus, the conventionalization of individual concerns which the *buntang* involves is parallelled by the social integration of what are otherwise rather dispersed communities and kin groups, thereby providing a second sense in which ritualization amounts to what we might call an "imposition of society." It was in order to evoke this very fundamental function of the ritual that I opened this chapter with reference to the *longan*, which, in its capacity as a multi-dimensional center of a "ritual of concentration" — concerned with the concentration of souls, potency and social capital — metonymically indexes the ritual (as the Bentian also recognize, when they refer to holding a *buntang* as "erecting the *longan*," *nerek longan*). A third sense in which the *buntang* amounts to an "imposition of society" becomes immediately apparent if we think about what enters the discourse associated with the ritual, that is, the *belian*'s chants and the speeches given during it. This is the domain of social, relation-affirming values: reciprocity, respect, tradition, concentration and unity. Hardly anything is declared which would involve a forthright contestation of these values. Moreover, the consistently monologic form that this discourse takes — in the case of the chants as well as the

speeches — further underscores the same point, as does the transfer of voice or agency, from ordinary people to *belian*s, that ritualization involves.

What arranging a *buntang* on a very basic level involves is thus an assertion of, in Durkheim's phrase, "the authority of society," a fact which becomes yet more evident if we turn to what the ritual does through its program activities. Emically speaking, one of the most important aspects of the *buntang* is that it invokes and brings to the fore the spirits, who are agencies whose importance at other times is mostly latent. In doing so (e.g. through the soul search, or through *Nempuk pali*, ascending the *pali* spirits) the *buntang* reminds people of the spirit-induced sanctions of a number of taboos regulating elementary norms of social conduct, the upkeeping of which is, along with the arrangement of rituals in order to recompense for violations, one of the most important consequences of spirit authority, especially with regards to the authority of the *blis,* or malevolent spirits. Among the spirits which the *buntang* invokes are also the highly authoritative protecting spirits (*pengiring*) — most of whom, as an expression of their special authority, may not be addressed during other rituals — including the celestial *seniang* who regulate the interconnected moral and natural orders of the world, the *naiyu* who represent the principal source of potency in society, and the ancestors to whom the Bentian say that they owe everything they know, and with whom, in fact, all protecting spirits are more or less closely associated, either in terms of origins or roles in the ritual, making the *buntang* into something of an ancestral cult in disguise.[173] Through its thanksgiving and supplication activities, the *buntang* celebrates and represents the ancestors and the other protecting spirits as in various respects providing the foundation of the lives of the ritual participants, and the latter as being irrevocably indebted to them, a matter receiving particular force by the general social importance of the principle of precedence, epitomized by the concept of *puun*, as a grounds for authority. Culminating in the anointment by blood of the ancestral objects at the *longan*, and the offering of select cooked food to the *seniang* and the *kelelungan*, the ritual merges the authority of

[173] This observation is notably somewhat at odds with Sellato's view that there does not in Borneo exist any widespread ancestor worship or ancestor cult strictly speaking (1989:43; 2002; but see 2002:1), as well as with what appears as a general attempt by him to downplay the importance of spirits of the dead in indigenous religions and rituals in Borneo (Sellato 2002). Rather than seeing, like Sellato, that the importance of ancestors or spirits of the dead has been exaggerated in Borneo, I would be inclined to concur here with Wadley (2000) that an aspect of religious life generally overlooked in Borneo studies (beyond the context of secondary mortuary rituals) is the importance of the ancestors. In the Luangan case, at least, the keeping and the regular ritual "feeding" of ancestor skulls (in *buntang*s), and the presence of special rituals (*gombok mpe selimat, kwangkai*) held to install a "selected few" of the spirits of the dead as protecting spirits, also motivate use of the term "ancestor" (rather than just "spirit of the dead") in the specific, narrow sense advocated by Sellato (2002:1-2,14). And even though it is true that the spirits of the dead among the Luangan in many ways are treated as "just another sort of spirit" (Sellato 2002:15), the ancestors (or forebears in general) do collectively represent a special, and major source of authority, the influence of which stretches far beyond the religious realm.

society with that of the sacred, or as Bloch would have it, articulates the former with a "transcendental order" (cf. Bloch 1987; Bloch and Parry 1982).

Apart from thus elevating and thereby exteriorizing the authority of society, the *buntang* simultaneously contributes to make it part of the natural order of things as it does with respect to religious authority. Because of the frequency with which *buntang*s and other rituals are arranged, ritualization has, I have argued, been sedimented as a "natural attitude of everyday life." Contributing to this sedimentation is the extensive redundancy and condensation of the *buntang*, promoting, in particular, a solid internalization of its basics. As personally lived tradition, ritualization itself is seen as a natural thing to do, a fact which in its own right, or because of the properties of what Bourdieu (1977:170) calls "doxa," accounts for much of its own ability to authorize.

Turning to this second basic question that I have posed with respect to ritualization (why it is authoritative), other factors are also relevant; some, like anonymization and formalization, because they establish the ritual as ancestral tradition. Of particular significance is ritual language which is perceived to be the most instrumental aspect of ritual action due to representing the original words of the ancestors. Formalization additionally functions to make ritualization authoritative in a somewhat different respect by generating a code and a set of general conditions inhibiting contestation. Restricting expression to correct traditional expression, it narrows competence for expression as well as limits the content and form of what may be expressed into what is congruent with relation-affirming and non-confrontative values (e.g. monologue). A related factor working to inhibit contestation is the transposition, at least on the overt plane, of what is expressed (whether by nonverbal ritual action or by the chants) from the sphere of particular indexical statements into that of conventional non-propositional enactments, a process which serves to take ritualization beyond the realm of the debatable (at least as regards its indexical, if not yet its conventional dimension). As Bloch has articulately put it: "You cannot argue with a song" (1974:71), and a song is, to an important extent, what the *buntang* is, symbolically speaking. In fact, a song, or more precisely, a particular rhythm and melody played by drums and gongs, is also the only literal meaning which the word "*buntang*" has, apart from a designation for the ritual. This musical piece, which forms something of a signature rhythm/melody of the *buntang*, played intermittently during the ritual on spontaneous initiative from the participants without connection to the *belian*-led ritual activities, expresses, like the *nyelele nyelayau* calls, the festive ambience expected to prevail, but also the kind of "collective effervescence," (or what comes closest to it in Bentian society) taken by Durkheim (1995) to most directly express and arouse his famous *conscience collective*.

Even though the oscillation in Bentian society between dispersal and concentration is probably less extreme than it was among the nineteenth century Australian tribes, and the excitement associated with congregation less intense, the ultimate source of the

authority of the rite, if there ever was one, may well be the same in both cases: the moral community. At its base, religious authority is moral authority. It is, in Durkheim's (1995:224) words, "but one aspect of the moral influence that society exerts on its members" (kinship authority being another, I would add). It hereby follows that religious authority, like kinship authority, does not primarily have a rational or utilitarian foundation; rather, deference to religious authority has, in Weber's terms, a "value-rational" basis, as was also Durkheim's (implicit) point regarding the authority of society more generally (1995:208-216). Thus ritualization is authoritative because it commands what Durkheim (1995:209) calls "genuine respect," the ultimate objects of which are, in this case, the values (e.g. reciprocity, concentration, and precedence) with which Bentian rituals, and *buntang*s in particular, are associated.

The most immediate objects of respect invoked by the ritual are not values, however — no matter how concrete these may be in this case in terms of everyday relevance — but instead the above-mentioned spirit authorities including the ancestors, and certain sacred objects representing them. More than an epiphenomenon, the spirit authorities themselves contribute to the authority of ritualization, as well as contributing to the authority of the values which they sanction. It is, at least, from the spirit authorities' assumed blessing (its absence being only potentially and tentatively establishable *ex post facto* by untoward developments) that ritualization, in combination with the fact that it represents ancestral and hence uniquely authoritative action, is *perceived* to derive its capacity to authorize (social relationships, residence shifts, etc.). Spirit authority is also a factor inhibiting contestation of ritualization in so far as the spirits can be taken to support ritualization, which they usually can, at least in the case of the *buntang*, since this ritual, whatever its more concrete objectives, represents an attempt to repay and honor them. Thus ritualization *per se* is difficult to criticize — and ritual participation difficult to resist — even though one may well disagree with some of the indexical purposes behind a particular instance of ritualization, a condition which accounts at once for much of the strength as well as the weakness of ritualization.

As Bell (1992:218) observes, ritualization "does not assume or implement total social control; it is a flexible strategy, one that requires complicity to the point of public consent, but not much more than that." What the *buntang* can do is state a particular world view, and usually also, granted subscription to that world view, bring people together. Also, if people, for instance, have decided to move, marry or live together outside matrimony, it has the capacity to consecrate this. But, if they do not want to, it cannot make people move, marry or live together. Nor can it, as Bell notes, "turn a group of individuals into a community if they have no other relationships or interests in common" (1992:222). And as our example has shown, it cannot guarantee the materialization of collective effervescence. Thus Weinstock's (1987:97) characterization of Kaharingan as what "weaves the societal *thread* that binds the community from life

through death [italics added]" is appropriate not only in highlighting the centrally important integrative function of the religion, but also in providing a sense of the delicacy of this medium of integration.

5. Political Authority: Leadership, Law, and Government Influence

Introduction

This chapter considers "political authority," that is, *authority which is exercised by or derives from encompassing institutions or their representatives*. By "encompassing institutions" I mean institutions which are concerned with the organization of supra-familial affairs, including inter-familial, communal and supra-communal ones.[174] What I call political authority is a complex category which may perhaps most simply be defined negatively, in contrast to the types of authority discussed in the previous chapters, as "secular authority derived from beyond the sphere of kinship." Political authority is not to any significant extent exercised by *belians*, or at least not by *belians* in their capacity as such, and those who principally exert it (i.e. the *manti*) do so not only or primarily from a position defined by kinship but in a more specialized capacity. However, this is not to say that political authority is not at all affected by kinship or religion; indeed, as we shall see, political authority is in some significant respects sanctioned by kinship and religious authority.

The principal focus of this chapter is on leadership in that it is particularly concerned with the authority exercised by the *manti*, but it also examines authority that other local people exert over each other or themselves and authority that non-locals exert over locals, in so far as it qualifies as political in the sense outlined above. Besides *manti*ship, *adat* or customary law, which is formally exercised mainly by the *manti* on special occasions, but informally frequently self- or other-imposed by virtually everyone in everyday action, also forms another centrally important political institution analyzed in this chapter, as does the government, for which the above characteristics of *adat* equally apply. Together, these three institutions also form what could be called the trinity of Bentian political authority. They are closely interconnected institutions, each of whose local importance has tended to reinforce the others — and thus they cannot fruitfully be studied separately.

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[174] Thus my understanding of political authority is, in a sense, close to conventional anthropological understandings of the concept, that is, it relates to what Hoebel (1958:225) calls "the political organization": "that part of social organization which controls relations between groups within the society in terms of the societal whole ... [or] of the members of the society qua society in their contacts with other societies." However, the fact that I say "authority which is exercised by or derives from encompassing institutions" indicates that political authority in my view may also apply to intra-familial relations, a fact making it somewhat wider than conventional anthropological understandings. However, a view that institutional power exists within households is held also by others (cf. Blanton 1995).

A general feature of political authority is that it is relatively exogenous in derivation, at least as compared to kinship and religious authority which may be regarded as predominantly indigenous and local. The local significance of *manti*ship, *adat*, and the government each also reflect the importance of the wider world and a long-lasting historical process of generally increasing regional and local integration which will be discussed in some detail in this chapter. This process has been far from smooth, however, and it has not, in many people's view, yet progressed very far. Compared with other peoples in the region, the Bentian are still unusually weakly integrated, both in respect to their "internal" and their "external" relations. This fact represents a condition and a stigma which has thoroughly shaped their understanding of themselves as well as their relations with others. Understandably, it has also restricted the exercise of political authority among the Bentian at the same time as the exercise of political authority has been essentially concerned with altering this condition.

*Manti*ship through History

The word *manti* has two somewhat distinct referents: elders acting as spokespersons or leaders of particular housegroups or other family units, and people recognized as community leaders. The *manti* thus form an essentially heterogeneous category; there are, as many Bentians would be eager to affirm, *manti* of different ranks and dignity.[175] Over time, the meaning of the term, and the nature of *manti*ship, have also varied. Analyzing *manti*ship, it is therefore necessary to begin by clarifying what it is that we are dealing with, a task which I will address by going back in time and tracing the development of the institution. I will present a history of *manti*ship, which serves not only to illuminate the past, but also the present: despite having varied in importance historically, most of the historical functions of the *manti* that I describe remain important today. Having done so, I will provide an analysis of *manti*ship in the present situation, pivoting around a discussion of the authority of three *manti* whom I came to know well during my fieldwork. After that I will discuss the concept and the institution of *adat*, concentrating especially on the meaning and application of *adat* in practice. Finally, I will address the topic of government authority and other government influences, paying particular attention to questions arising from the Bentian's precarious predicament of being weakly integrated politically.

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[175] In a somewhat rare attempt at systematization, a high-ranking Benuaq *manti* made the following classification of *manti* ranks: *manti* ("housegroup heads" or *manti* who share community leadership with others), *manti mento* ("solitary *manti*," i.e. community leaders), *manti tatau* ("great *manti*," who possess supra-community authority or at least renown), and *tatau tagas* ("great *manti* who occupy an official position").

Bentians told me that in the far past they used to be more equal (*rata,* M.) than what they later became. Then, I was told, everybody was a *manti*. Exactly to how far back in time these statements were intended to apply was not clear; what was clear only was that they referred to a period preceding the distribution of titles to Bentian leaders by the sultan of Kutai from some point in the nineteenth century. What was also made clear was that they referred to a period when residence was highly dispersed and people had not yet settled in permanent villages, but lived "in the forest" (*saang laang*) alternating residence between swidden houses and small dispersed "longhouses" (*lou*). At this time the scope of leadership would usually be restricted to leadership over the typically closely related two- or three-generational families (*aben*) who would gather in one of these *lou*. Not infrequently, a *lou* would even have several *manti*, in which case the authority of the *manti* in question might be restricted to just one of the component families of the house. The statement, misleading if taken literally, that "everybody was a *manti*" referred to an ambivalently valued condition in which every family, or at least every housegroup, had their own *manti*, who would not submit to any other.

I was told that the term "*manti*," like that of *"tatau"* which I shall discuss below, was an indigenous one, unlike the titles (*temanggung, mangku, singa*, etc.) which were conferred to leaders by the sultan of Kutai in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. However it seems likely that it was originally adopted as a result of outside influence, more precisely as a result of direct or indirect contact with the sultanates who from about the seventeenth century prescribed an administrative order in which *menteri* was a designation for local leaders charged with the task of administering customary law (*adat*). As among the Ma'anyan where *mantri* designates knowledgeable elders who serve as adjudicators in *adat*-law cases (Hudson 1972:46), early Bentian *manti* were also elders who administered *adat*, but among the Bentian, at least, the term had a wider application, also pertaining to the elders in question in a more general capacity as leaders/representatives of particular families or houses.[176] This is not to say that such a

[176] It is quite likely that the same wide application of the term *"mantri"* also occurs among the Ma'anyan, although Hudson (1972, 1978) is not explicit on this point. He reports, however, that *lewu'* families, structurally equivalent to (albeit perhaps slightly smaller than) Bentian housegroups, have leaders and spokespersons performing similar tasks as those performed by the Bentian *manti* (Hudson & Hudson 1978:223). It would come as no surprise if Ma'anyans would refer to these leaders as *"mantri"* as well, and we may most certainly assume a certain overlap between them and those individuals who are referred to as *"mantri"* on account of acting as adjudicators in *adat* cases. It seems that other Dayaks too employ or have employed the term *"mantri"* in this general sense. Rousseau gives *"mantri"* as a local term for elder and describes elders as individuals who play a prominent part in political activities (decision-making, adjudication) (1990:175, 194-95). The use of *"mantri"* in the sense of leader is undoubtedly ancient. For the Barito region in the late eighteenth century, the term was used by the Dutch sergeant F.J. Hartman (see Leupe 1864) to refer to Dayak (Dusun) as well as Malay

position could not have been indigenous to the Bentian. On the contrary, even if the term were new, self-appointed family heads may well have been acting in the same capacity since long before, in so far as their social organization and basic way of life had not been significantly different.[177] The fact that most family and housegroup *manti* are elders who stand in a *puun* relationship to their followers attunes well with Bentian and general Austronesian notions according to which elders should "take responsibility over" their followers/descendants (*anak opo*). A more or less formalized code of customary law was also likely exercised by the same category of people even before the introduction of *adat* and the *manti* concept. Nevertheless, these concepts probably became more self-conscious and objectified, especially in their capacity as custodians of customary law.

The early Bentian *manti* thus primarily acted as housegroup heads, as many of them still do, a task which included, in addition to representation of their subjects in *adat* matters, distribution of use rights to lands previously cultivated by the housegroup's past and present members, arrangement of the members' marriages, custodianship of the ancestral valuables of the house, and the organization of various daily activities. However, the responsibility of the housegroup *manti* was not restricted to internal housegroup affairs; it also comprised regulation, in cooperation with others of their kind, of the common affairs of the inhabitants of the usually several *lou* who together constituted a named subgroup or community with a distinct, carefully demarcated territory. Negotiation with other such subgroups over, for instance, community boundaries, was also an activity in which these *manti* engaged, and in such activities some principle of selection presumably operated, restricting the number of *manti* involved. However, above the housegroup level early Bentian *manti* authority was essentially shared and collective. In this respect, the Bentian situation resembled that of the precolonial Melanau of coastal Sarawak, among whom "[t]he administration of the adet [*adat*], and therefore the political control of the village, always had been in the hands of a *group* [my emphasis] of aristocratic elders" (Morris 1978:51). This indicates the fundamental fact that, similar to the Melanau, "leadership ... was not formalized as a permanent office, and there were no single political chiefs who ruled villages as of personal right" (Morris 1978:51).

(Banjar) leaders.

[177] Regarding the distant past we may only speculate, as oral history generally goes back only a couple of centuries at which point it starts to merge with the mythology of the early ancestors. The first, generally very brief references to the Bentian and other Luangans in the literature date back to the same period. Nevertheless, it seems, as earlier argued, quite likely that the Bentian's way of life is quite ancient. However, even though all information that I have been able to obtain from informants suggest that the Bentian, like other Luangans, have been swidden cultivators for very long (as does the central cultural importance of rice in Luangan ritual, and the complexity of the latter), the claims by Weinstock (1983a:74) and Knapen (2001:98) that the Luangan or Luangans used to be hunters and gatherers possibly up until the nineteenth century, cautions us against hastening to conclusions on this point.

Unlike among the Melanau, however, the early Bentian *manti* were not what Morris (1978:48) labels "aristocrats," a "rank" which the Melanau interestingly term *"menteri*." As family leaders, the Bentian *manti* came from and were part of the families that they represented, who were not ranked according to an encompassing stratification system similar to that of the Melanau or such Dayak groups as the Kayan (Rousseau 1978) or the Maloh (King 1978b). In other words, the early Bentian *manti* were not elected from, nor did they together represent, a particular, distinct stratum. In a structural sense, their authority over their subjects was based not on a position of class difference, but rather on one of kinship relatedness. It was on account of being related to the inhabitants of a *lou* — particularly in the capacity of elder (*tuha*) and "trunk"/"owner" (*puun*) — that the position of a *manti* as their leader and spokesperson was legitimated.

Now these observations should not lead us to assume that the Bentian used to be fully egalitarian, any more than the famously egalitarian Iban, for example, ever were so (Sather 1996). Even if every, or most, "extended families" had a *manti*, and there existed no institutionalized authority above the housegroup, there certainly existed some status differences between the *manti*, and between families as well. For example, some *manti*, famous till this day, no doubt held more influence in community and inter-community affairs than did others. With respect to such affairs, those *manti* who most directly descended from the ancestor(s) who had founded the community by first clearing land in the area which was to become its territory were likely at an advantage over other *manti* in the community, not the least because of the advantage that this relationship entailed with regards to their role as custodians of previously cultivated lands (as it meant that they were likely to manage an especially large reserve of such lands). In an often cited report on the social organization of the longhouse societies of Sarawak, Edmund Leach (1950:61) noted that "political authority," in both what he called the "egalitarian" and the "stratified" societies of the region, "rested with a small group of related families the members of which had a more direct linkage to the ancestral founders of the house (or village) than other members of the community." The same situation likely prevailed at least to a degree among the Bentian as well, where one *lou* within a community was commonly regarded as *puun* in respect to the others. However, other factors such as eloquence and persuasiveness of speech, knowledge of *adat*, and not least importantly, ambition, probably mattered at least as much for such relative *manti* authority, which was predominantly acquired. For ambitious *manti* lacking cognatic descent linkages to community founders, marrying into such a *lou* also constituted an option compensating for such genealogical shortcomings.

Yet another and absolutely essential factor with respect to *manti* authority was the number of the followers which a *manti* could draw upon in the capacity of *lou* leader and, to a lesser degree, by way of kinship relations transcending *lou* boundaries. Social capital is crucial to a *manti* in many ways, and I will say more about this shortly. Here I want to

draw attention not only to the established truism that control over manpower (rather than land) was the basis of leadership in Southeast Asia (e.g. Reid 1988; Wolters 1982), but also, and more specifically, to the importance of kin relations for the accumulation of followers. As demonstrated in Chapter 3, the force of kinship obligations, loosely defined, provides a singularly valuable resource in Bentian society, and this is, or at least used to be, no less true for leaders than for other people. In fact, given the organization of Bentian society, it was practically impossible for early Bentian *manti* to obtain a greater amount of social capital without what might be called "adequate kin resources." This does not just mean plenty of kin relations, which practically every Bentian has, but especially such kin resources as to which relatively few equal or stronger competing claims could be made by other *manti*. Most important in this respect were the people who made up one's own housegroup, and especially one's own and one's close relatives' descendants over whom relatively strong vertical claims of authority could be made, due to *puun* status. This means that *manti* with many children were privileged, a fact which partly explains the common practice of polygamy (and possibly some instances of adoption) among the *manti*. However, many personal descendants were scarcely enough in so far as the achievement of a greater degree of "relative" *manti* influence was concerned. For such influence, in particular, close collateral relations, especially those with siblings, appear to have been crucial, both in themselves, but also for the reason that one's siblings' children count almost as one's own and thus are particularly likely to act as one's "followers," a concept whose closest Bentian counterpart significantly is the metaphorically used term *anak opo*, which literally means "children and grandchildren." Because of inter-*manti* competition, obtaining a greater degree of *manti* influence demanded the backings of a relatively populous *lou* of one's own, just as one would not likely be considered a *manti* in the first place if one did not have at least a minimal housegroup to represent (e.g. in customary law negotiations or in community meetings). This condition, coupled with the structural significance of sibling sets for Bentian *lou*, meant that belonging to a sibling set, the larger the better, was something of a prerequisite for influential *manti*ship (more distant relatives were more likely to act as followers of other *manti* with whom they were more closely related). Most past as well as present influential *manti* that I heard of also had several siblings, which notably is something which not all Bentians, because of the low birth and high infant mortality rates, are fortunate to have.

An additional and most important reason why a *manti* would benefit from having many descendants was that he, by arranging their marriages, could strategically expand his network of followers or create alliances with other influential *manti*, thus enhancing his own status. Having many descendants or a large following more generally was also essential because the accumulated agricultural surplus and workforce thereby acquired could be employed for the arrangement of grand *buntangs*, a crucial source of *manti*

status — and in itself a principal means of mobilizing social capital. Last but not least, social capital was necessary in order to obtain forest products (rattan, resins, etc.) for trade (with itinerant Kutainese/Buginese traders, or Bekumpais settled on the Teweh), as well as for the arrangement of *roing*, that is, formalized "exchange visits" carried out by large groups of men to other, often quite distant communities (e.g. in Pasir, on the Teweh). As it was through trade and these *roing* expeditions — which were characterized by reciprocal gift-giving between ideally allied units — that the Bentian mainly obtained, besides salt, cloth, kitchen utensils and other necessities not produced locally, their "traditional valuables," that is, the objects (e.g. jars and gongs) which circulated in their *adat* economy as fines, ritual work rewards, and marriage payments (or which have, in some cases, been set aside as ancestral objects, *pusaka*), engaging in such activities was imperative for the *manti*. In the first place, such objects formed visible wealth, stored in their *lou*, and hence significantly contributed to their status. Yet more important, the traditional valuables were required for the practice of several central aspects of *manti*ship such as the sponsoring of rituals and marriages, and the payment of fines or other debts of followers or other people. The last-mentioned practice had a special significance in that it sometimes placed some people, who thereby became labelled *ripen,* in a relation of debt-bondage to the *manti* who acted as their benefactor. Paying back this debt by doing swidden work and performing other tasks, these individuals would significantly add to the social resources (and status) of their patrons. So would another category of "servants" or "slaves" — labelled *batang ulun* in distinction to the debt-servants — who were bought from other communities, typically in connection with *roing* expeditions. Raiding probably also constituted an occasional source of human and material resources, although more often it formed a source of depletion of such resources, since the Bentian, in the period between the late eighteenth and late nineteenth century, were subjected to recurrent, and sometimes quite devastating attacks by the numerically superior, and apparently much better organized Pari Dayaks (Bahau, Modang).

That some early *manti* were considerably more successful than others in amassing valuables and social capital is testified by the allegedly indigenous term "*tatau*," a word designating "great *manti*" (*manti solai*) with particular connotations of wealth and social resources. Bentian trade with outsiders enabling accumulation of valuables (which were not produced locally) had likely been going on for several centuries, thus some general economic differentiation as well as some *manti* status differentiation had probably already developed before integration with the Kutai sultanate gained momentum in the nineteenth century, a fact which may slightly mitigate the statements that the Bentian were "equal" (*rata*) until then. Among neighboring Luangans on the Teweh river, where trade with downriver people is known to have been extensive since long ago (e.g. see Hartman 1790 in Leupe 1860; Schwaner 1854), some particularly great *manti* are said to have constructed special buildings (*petiling*), raised on very tall posts, for their unmarried

and secluded daughters, a mythically celebrated practice demonstrating, besides their fathers' elevated status, incipient tendencies to class endogamy (the daughters were secluded because they were reserved for marriages with other *manti*).

Nineteenth Century Transformations in the Bentian's Social and Political Economy

In the nineteenh century, however, the situation changed significantly in many ways, leading to increasing stratification. In the first place, trade itself greatly intensified with an unprecedented influx into the interior of itinerant traders — particularly Buginese (cf. Tromp 1887), but later also Banjarese (Magenda 1991:3).[178] This followed the expanding inland control of the sultanate, as well as the developing tributary relations of the Bentian with the sultan, who was visited by *roing*-like groups led by *manti* in Tenggarong, the royal capital. Of central significance in this connection was rattan, with the growing demand stimulating rattan cultivation. As a result of the regional and local intensification of trade, the availability of valuables increased, enabling (and probably also prompting) further differentiation. A major new category of wealth first acquired by Bentians at this time — mainly through *roing* expeditions to Pasir — was the water buffalo. This animal, generally rare in interior Borneo, but kept in the hundreds in some small Bentian communities,[179] soon became both a paramount status marker of the *manti*, sacrificed and fed to guests during larger rituals (mainly *buntang* and secondary mortuary rituals, *gombok*), as well as an important item in the *adat* economy, involved especially in larger transactions. The introduction of the water buffalo into the ritual and *adat* economy of the Bentian at this time was certainly not incidental but indexed concurrent changes taking place in their more general as well as social economy. The intensification of trade went hand in hand with an increasing stratification, causing transformations in a broad range of sectors of society.

An important driving force with respect to these changes was the Kutai Sultanate which, especially during the active reign of Sultan Aji Muhammad Sulaiman (1850-1899), distributed numerous titles to upriver tributary leaders (cf. Wortmann

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[160] This local intensification of trade, like that in Kutai as a whole, reflected a more general, regional intensification of trade, which took on speed especially from the 1820s with the founding of Singapore and a rapidly strengthening Dutch presence in south Borneo (see. e.g. Alexander 1992:210; Healey 1985:7; Knapen 2001:380, 383-85; Walker 2002:25; Wortmann 1971b:6). Before this, the trade of the interior with the outside world had been much less extensive (see e.g. Knapen 2001:374-375, 390; Sellato 2001:38-39). Thus, the local processes were ultimately prompted, or at least significantly stimulated by, more global ones.

[179] The people of Temiang, the one community where I stayed the longest time, owned only about a dozen water buffalo as was the case with neighboring Datai Munte. Unfortunately, I did not stay for a sufficient period of time in those villages which had the greatest number of water buffalos, in order to explore in depth the animal's significance under such circumstances.

1971a:54),[180] at the same time as it attempted to concentrate dispersed populations in permanent villages, and to relocate them to more accessible locations along navigable rivers, policies which the Dutch had begun to implement already in the late eighteenth century in the Barito region (Knapen 2001:88-89, 250).[181] Motivated by the interests of developing taxation and district (*wilayah*) level administration in upriver areas, these developments were encouraged by the slowly progressing pacification of the interior (sanctioned by the Dutch as well as by the Kutai Sultanate), and the now annual royal ritual of *Erau* to which representatives of upriver peoples were invited to pay tribute and stage ceremonies. The titles, substantiated by a letter (*surat*) and an emblem (*seluit*) depicting the Kutai coat of arms, served to represent that the title-holders occupied an office (*pangkat*) and thus were authorized by the sultanate to lead and to collect tribute (later, taxes) in particular villages. Hence they were sought and acquired by many ambitious *manti* who because of their interest in obtaining these titles had a strong motive to establish villages as well as to recognize, in at least some contexts, the sultanate's claims to authority over the interior. In this respect, the Bentian situation resembled that in Semporna, coastal Sabah, where peripheral leaders also received titles from the sultan (of Sulu) through letters with the expectation that they "would collect tribute ... [and] make periodic visits to the court seat of Jolo," and where the authority that they thereby gained, meant that they "had an interest in preserving ... the authority of the sultan" (Sather 1997:39-40).

Nevertheless, much of the remote interior, including the Bentian area, remained in reality far beyond the effective control of the sultanate, and the Bentian, who did not have a tradition of nucleated villages (or village leadership), were quite slow to respond to the demands for village settlement and tribute/taxation. Contacts with the sultanate were frequently minimal, in part because of the distance (one to two week's travel, one way), but also because of a desire to preserve their autonomy. As noted by Carl Bock ([1881]:147) during his 1879 journey through the Bentian area, there existed "a strong objection to being governed by, and taxed for the benefit of, a Malay ruler." Many Bentians at this time apparently took pride in not being *suaka* ("tributary," "subordinated"), a word which still today, despite frequently expressed subscription to the sacrosanct New Order value of unity, has derogatory connotations. Other factors which probably also hampered more intense downriver contacts and settlement in villages were frequent epidemics — in the face of which dispersion (and isolation) were perceived as the best defense — and trade connections with the Teweh area on the other side of the

[180] Wortmann (1971a:54) notes that "the 19th century saw such an indiscriminate awarding of them [i.e. "lower titles"] that their prestige became grossly devaluated."

[181] The Dutch may also have been indirectly responsible for the implementation of this policy in Kutai, by having instructed the sultanate to perform it (see Fried 1995:56).

Mahakam-Barito watershed outside of Kutai. On at least a couple of occasions, envoys of the sultan were killed by Bentians resisting what they perceived as attempts at exploitation (cf. assistant resident Weddik, 1849:133, who considered that the sultan oppressed the Bentian, along with the Benuaq and the Bongan). Because of the remoteness of the Bentian area, violence, or the threat of violence, in the form of attacks from the Pari or other Dayaks also persisted until the turn of the twentieth century, contributing to a general disinclination for contacts with outsiders.

The first Bentians to establish a still-existing village, as well as more firm contacts with the sultanate, were probably those of Dilang Puti, the present-day subdistrict capital, which was founded early in the second half of the nineteenth century. Here were the most influential leaders ever to have ruled among the Bentian, with claims not only to village-wide, but even to district-wide authority. Not long after its establishment, Dilang Puti was already a remarkably large settlement, comprising a large open space and several sizeable, longhouse-like *lou*, later connected through long stretches of ironwood walkways (so that the inhabitants would not have to walk in the dirt on the ground around the houses where a large number of water buffalo were kept). According to Bock ([1881]:141) it was the "largest and neatest village" which he had seen in Kutai, with an alleged (but probably exaggerated) population of as many as 1800 people.[182] As Bock's description makes clear, the inhabitants of the village were — unlike the population further upriver — allies of the sultan already at the time of his visit. The connection with the sultanate had probably played at least an indirect role in the establishment of the village, as it did with respect to the government-sanctioned authority encompassing the upriver communities in the area that the village's leaders later claimed (but these claims were not much more than nominal in practice, except in the case of the closest neighboring villages).[183] Endorsement in the form of recognition from the sultanate meant

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[182] Considering that Dilang Puti had 387 inhabitants in 1939 (Jongbloed 1939), the number reported by Bock was likely an exaggeration, even allowing for several subsequent epidemics, which Bentians often present as the main reason for their low population numbers today. Certainly all these people were not normally resident in the four to five *lou* of the village. It seems more likely that the number given, if in some sense factual, was meant to include all the people over whom the leaders of the village in some theoretical sense (e.g. on the basis of a sultanate letter) regarded themselves as having authority, for example, all the people of the Lawa river basin, or all the people of the district (*wilayah*) of Bentian Besar. According to numbers of *controleur* Jongbloed, the total population of the Bentian villages existent in 1935 was 2164 people. Today Dilang Puti's population consists of some seven hundred people, including many in-married individuals and government officials of diverse ethnic origins.

[183] This is not to say that the establishment of a village in Dilang Puti, and the fact that it was here rather than elsewhere in the Bentian area that the greatest Bentian *manti* emerged, can be accounted for by sultanate influence alone. Reference has to be made also to some other factors, of which I will first note two which both indicate the historical importance of trade and exchange for *manti*ship. First, Dilang Puti is located furthest downstream of the Bentian villages, at the last (normally) continually navigable section of the Lawa, thus in a particularly favorable position for trade and other contacts with outsiders (even today, government officials or other people who visit the Bentian area, usually go no further than Dilang Puti). In the second place, many of the village's founders came from a local group

that the leaders' authority was imbued with something approaching state authority, entailing an external and obviously powerful source of legitimation which at least theoretically could be drawn upon for military support.[184] The establishment of a village, as a result of the spatial concentration which it entailed (at least occasionally), logistically facilitated, in turn, a more effective leadership over large populations than what had been possible when settlement was more dispersed.

However, it was still to take about half a century before the other Bentian communities established villages. Even though there were many leaders who claimed to have received titles from the sultan in most communities (in fact, there were often several in the same community), these leaders did not usually, because of the internal competition between them, enjoy enough authority to gather followings large enough to establish villages, and in many cases, they probably also lacked the ambition. An example here is provided by the early village of Lendiong where Knappert in 1903 encountered some five to six leaders who possessed "grand titles" which had been bought from the sultan's envoys (*mantri*!), and where the most prominent and "principal" (*algemeen*) leader had not yet been able to rebuild the village's sole and desolate *lou*, despite a government order issued to this effect six years earlier (Knappert 1905:627). In the 1920s and 1930s, when all presently existing villages finally had been established (plus a few which have subsequently been dissolved), most villages consisted of several, in some cases up to twelve or more, *lou*, each with its own *longan* and *manti*, many of whom would not recognize the ultimate authority of anyone else. Testifying to such defiance are the facts that some villages were subdivided by the Dutch administration into a number

(Rempangan) which in the mid-nineteenth century was known as one of the richest in the Bentian-Teweh area. Prior to its establishment, these people had bought, in two stages, the land where the village is located from its previous inhabitants (the Tementang, a Benuaq subgroup) for the remarkable price of two times one hundred jars (*antang*) and one slave. As this indicates, local initiative and accomplishments achieved independently of the sultanate also played an essential role with respect to these developments. Before moving to Dilang Puti, the village's inhabitants had lived in an unusually large longhouse in a nearby location called Dilang Tonoi. However, besides reflecting leadership ambitions, the concentration of a large number of people (from several local groups) in this longhouse and location was a response to the general disorder that the region was in at the time. Practically all local groups or communities (*benua*) were resettling, moving downstream, according to an at this time typical pattern characterized by each group moving "one step" downriver, thus coming to occupy the territory of its closest downriver neighbors. On top of that, the Pari and rebel groups from the Barito river raided the area (see Tromp 1889:282) and some local groups were in conflict with the Sultan. Epidemics also frequently afflicted the area, and as a result of one, the inhabitants of Dilang Tonoi were forced to leave their longhouse and move to Dilang Puti.

[184] An occasional presence of sultanate troops in the area (for example, accompanying Bock on his journey) in the second half of the nineteenth century, made military support appear plausible. Even though I do not know if such support ever materialized, other military-backed government interventions (including punitive actions) reportedly did occur.

of autonomous subvillages,[185] and that many housegroups with their *manti* continued to stay away from the villages in more or less independent (but officially unrecognized) forest *lou* until recently.[186] *Bote ene erai blai*, "don't build one house," was a warning that I was told was expressed by some Bentians at this time — implying that the members from several housegroups should not all settle in one *lou* when taking up village residence — out of concern for the conflicts that would often arise from such concentration.

Despite the strong internal competition, however, some *manti* managed to attain some measure of influence over entire communities even before settlement in villages, and they increasingly did so afterwards. In addition to increasing wealth, the titles, and a government expectation (established at least at the time of Knappert's visit) that villages should have one principal leader, such influence reflected the introduction in the second half of the nineteenth century of the communal *nalin taun* ritual which the Bentian learnt from the Benuaq who performed it in Tenggarong as part of the program of the royal *Erau* ritual. Like the introduction of water buffalo, whose sacrifice is mandatory in the *nalin taun* (in addition to a large number of pigs and chickens), the development of this ritual, an elaborated version of the *buntang*, was interconnected with the progression of several concurrent processes, including the regional integration of the sultanate as a whole as well as the local integration and increasing stratification of the upriver peoples concerned. Being performed both downriver and upriver, the ritual served to promote the sultan's interests in increasing his upriver subjects' trade and tributary contacts with him, as well as the *manti*s' interests in accumulating followers and acquiring external legitimation of their authority.

According to the view of some older people in the villages where I did fieldwork, the *nalin taun* originated among Benuaqs on the upper Bongan (Nyungan), a tributary of the Mahakam, where it was first arranged to "treat" (*nalin*) incest/too close marriage (*sumbang*), which had incited a solar eclipse (*olo kelom*), a highly inauspicious sign of impending misfortune resulting from disturbed relations between "the low ones down below" (*rena uwa*), that is, people on earth, and the heavenly *seniang* (who act as guardians of sexual relations, as well as of the natural cycles). Later these Benuaqs, or others who had learnt it from them (possibly Ohong river Benuaqs), performed this ritual in Tenggarong, the royal capital, initially, one informant told me, because the sultan, in order to keep the royal blood pure, himself had commited *sumbang*. After awhile the

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[185] The villages in questions were Sambung, Tende, and Randa Empas which were subdivided into Sambung 1 and 2, Tende 1 and 2, and Randa Empas 1, 2, and 3, respectively, because some of their *manti* would not defer to anyone else.

[186] The existence of such forest *lou* gradually diminished and almost disappeared in the New Order era (1965-1998) when government efforts aimed at concentrating people in villages intensified.

ritual became regularly performed in Tenggarong for the general benefit of the sultan and his kingdom as part of the *Erau*. Then, as in most cases when arranged upriver, it served primarily as a combined purification/supplication ritual concerned especially, as expressed most popularly, with "making fruits ripen, honey abound, wild boar flock, fish swarm" (*adi bua mua, wani murek, bawi japi, kinas jelur*), or in other words — as suggested by the ritual's name, the literal meaning of which is "to heal the year" — with favorably affecting the course of the natural cycles.[187] However, as suggested above, it is clear that the *nalin taun* simultaneously also served other, more sociological purposes.

In connection with the performance of the ritual in Tenggarong, small amounts of husked rice colored red and yellow (*boias mea lemit*) were distributed to leaders of tribute-paying Dayaks who took part in the festivities. Back home these leaders stored this rice in special yellow pouches (yellow being the color of the sultanate) signifying their status as legitimate, tribute-paying leaders, and reused it in local *nalin taun* for which they themselves acted as the principal sponsors. Apart from thereby (by means of the red and yellow rice) compounding the sultanate's authority with local religious authority, the institution of the *nalin taun* simultaneously worked to legitimate (by external authority) the local leaders' authority (including, apparently, their authority to initiate a *nalin taun*). Still more important, from the point of view of the local sociological significance of the ritual, was the fact that the *nalin taun*, unlike pre-existing Bentian rituals, was considered to be a community ritual, arranged for the benefit of and requiring contributions from all or most families in a community. Thus the *manti* who took responsibility for a *nalin taun* in effect acted as a community leader (as well as demonstrated great wealth through his personal expenses for the ritual), while the community, in its turn, made manifest its identity and unity as a community, typically before an audience including the formally invited members of another community, to whom entertainment and traditional valuables were offered with expectations of equivalent returns presented in connection with a counter-ritual. In so doing, the *nalin taun* functioned in several mutually reinforcing ways to support the twin ambitions of the sultanate and many of the *manti* to establish concentrated village residence and village leadership — a fact which perhaps explains the coincidence, among the Bentian, of the greatest popularity and magnitude of the ritual with their early phase of village residence. One way in which the ritual did so was by "naturalizing" the leadership of the sultan and the sponsoring local leaders. From the perspective of the sultan, for example, the *nalin*

[187] At least upriver, *sumbang* remained and still remains an important issue addressed by *nalin taun*, although not the principal one. Correspondingly, such *nalin taun* which are primarily concerned with "treating incest" are sometimes terminologically distinguished from other *nalin taun* by being referred to as *nalin olo* (lit. "to treat the day"). On the Teweh river, where *nalin taun* is only performed rarely and in a limited number of communities, the format of the *nalin olo* is somewhat distinct and the ritual lasts only one day.

taun made, like the royal bath among the Merina of Madagascar, "royal power an essential aspect of cosmic social and emotional order" (Bloch 1987:294).[188] Moreover, by having upriver people perform *nalin taun* in Tenggarong, the sultan can be seen to have appropriated or tamed upriver energy in a way analogous to how the Merina kings tapped the wild fertility of Vazimba autochthonous spirits in their royal rituals (see Bloch 1987:94-100).

Besides *nalin taun*, which were held quite rarely (only once in a decade or so), other rituals also contributed to the status of aspiring *manti* at this time, especially those rituals in which water buffaloes now began to be sacrificed, but in principle any rituals during which large numbers of guests were fed. Especially important in this respect were large-scale *buntang*s and secondary mortuary rituals (*gombok*). Elaborate versions of the latter (*gombok mpe selimat, kwangkai*) were introduced or at least became much more common in this period, another fact reflecting the increasing status ambitions and material wealth of the *manti*. Among at least part of the Benuaq, who today are well-known for their extended and costly *kwangkais,* these rituals notably represent a nineteenth century innovation which they learned from the Bentian (until this time they had reportedly performed only a rather simple form of secondary mortuary ritual, *setanggih*). Another aspect of mortuary rituals testifying to growing status concerns at this time is the construction on graves of stupa-like, many-storeyed monuments of planks (*batur*), and the painting with special abstract designs of coffins and sarcophagi used for the storage of exhumed bones: these practices were either reserved for the *manti* or permitted only if certain minimal ritual requirements were met (e.g. the construction of a given amount of *batur* storeys required a specific amount of ritual expenses). The common practice of storing the exhumed remains of ancestors in precious jars possibly also reflects these concerns, or at least bears witness to the close connection that existed between the acquisition of status and the attainment of wealth through trade or other exchange, as does the fact that jars used for this purpose were smashed in order to prevent their reuse (see Knappert 1905:624).

Typically, those *manti* who were most ambitious and successful in terms of gaining supra-housegroup influence were also responsible for the construction of an extraordinary large *lou* (*lou solai*), which often was intended to serve as the center (*pusat*) of the community, or even house it in its entirety, at least for the duration of large-scale, status-enhancing rituals, and especially those (i.e. *nalin taun*) which symbolically incorporated the community's members. For the construction of such *lou*, the socio-material resources of the *manti* involved were probably essential prerequisites, as Miles (1964) argues was the case with Ngaju longhouses, the virtual paucity of which he interprets as an indication

[188] Bathing, incidentally, on chairs made of a cultivated yellow bamboo with green stripes (*bekuan*) associated with the royal court, is also an important element of the *nalin taun*.

of the great social (and natural) resources that building them required. Interestingly, the largest, most durable and most longhouse-like multi-family houses that I have heard of among the Bentian appear to have been constructed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, an indication, I hypothesize, of the increasing socio-material resources available to the *manti* at this time, and of their concurrent efforts, supported by the government, to establish villages and village leadership.[189] Also, before the late nineteenth century, ironwood, which as Miles (1964:54) notes is a scarce resource whose extraction requires extensive collective labor, had not been used as a house construction material by Bentians — *lou* and farmhouses alike being made of perishable materials and frequently rebuilt — an indication of the then emerging pattern of establishing permanent settlements. Furthermore, it appears that the sultanate supported the construction of such large *lou* among the Bentian at this time as a stage in village development, and many Bentian villages also originally consisted of one *lou*, even though these *lou* usually were, as noted above, supplemented before long by several others. Later, under Dutch or Indonesian rule when villages had already become established, it became expected that each village should have one *lou* which served as the *adat* longhouse (*lamin adat*) of the community, that is, as the place where major events pertaining to *adat* in the community were to be arranged and presided over by the government-recognized *kepala adat* (head of customary law).

An example of a very large *lou* preceding village establishment is found in Dilang Tonoi where the founders of Dilang Puti lived concentrated prior to founding the latter village at a nearby location. This apparently very longhouse-like *lou* was, according to Bentian standards, exceptionally large, allegedly housing several hundred inhabitants originating from several different communities, and divided into different sections according to subgroup identity. It is possibly this *lou* (but more probably a predecessor) which plays a prominent role in a story which I shall present soon, a story which was told to me by Kakah Ramat, the old and respected *belian* of Temiang discussed in the previous chapter. I present this story because it illustrates some crucial aspects of *manti*ship — especially, the importance of valuables and exchange for *manti*ship — as well as gives us some sense of how the Bentian themselves, in their own words, conceive of what it means to be a *manti*, particularly a great one.

Judging from a comparison of various elements of oral history, the events related in the story — principally two *roing* visits between two Bentian communities — occurred sometime around the mid-nineteenth century, so obviously this is primarily a description of historical *manti*ship, even though many features of *manti*ship illuminated by the story are still characteristic of the *manti* — and some of these will be essential for my analysis

[189] Significantly, the outstanding Ngaju longhouse described by Miles (1964) was also built in the 1890s by two ambitious men who had become extraordinarily rich by engaging in travel expeditions to Singapore.

of the institution. The events in question apparently took place before any proper villages had been established among the Bentian, even though the communities concerned notably are referred to by the present-day names (Dilang Puti and Lendian) of the villages which their members later founded. The two protagonist *manti* of the story apparently also functioned as the leading *manti* of their respective communities, or at least as their two most prominent ones. As indicated by the story, these *manti* had a status above the ordinary, as seen in the narrator's shifting use of the word *manti*, sometimes used more narrowly in the sense of community leader or great *manti* (as in "news had it that Dilang Puti had a *manti*, too"), sometimes more broadly encompassing both great *manti* and ordinary housegroup heads (as in "forty people, including many *manti*."). Another expression of the extraordinary status of these *manti* is the indirect description of the size of the Dilang Puti *lou* — indicated by the size of its *manti*'s compartment, the number of chicken cages associated with the house, and the amount of drinking water daily consumed — noted by the narrator as being something remarkable. The similarly noted cleanness of the food served to the guests, and the use of spices in it — assumably unusual at the time of the events described, as it still is in some places today — can probably be taken to illustrate the same thing, and possibly also as a suggestion of an usually high degree of downstream influence on the community concerned. Dilang Puti was, as already remarked, soon to become something of an ideal community among the Bentian in the sense that it was here that social concentration, government contacts, and *manti*ship materialized most fully.

The story is part of a longer story which I overheard Kakah Ramat tell to relatives one evening and then asked him to retell for a recording. The full story links together several rather widely separated episodes pertaining to intergroup relations of several different Bentian communities. The principal unifying element in these episodes is provided by a woman called Sentoa who directly or indirectly plays a role in each episode. For this reason I have called it "The story of Sentoa."

Recounted here is the initial episode which comprises about one fourth of the total story. As can be noted, the narrator occasionally commented on aspects of the story, turning to me. I have also put in a few explanations in brackets where deemed necessary in order to clarify aspects of the remarkably economical text, but otherwise I have avoided additions in an effort to preserve as closely as possible the character of the original which is strongly marked by the oral mode of its presentation.

The story purports to be a true story, but the inclusion of a number of standard elements typically part of stories of this kind suggests that certain details represent elaborations serving primarily as rhetorical devices, intended to dramatize and create a concrete feeling on the part of the listener for the events described (entering a longhouse in the capacity of guest, taking part in a *buntang,* etc.). The purpose is more to tell a good story — in a way that resonates with popular Bentian understandings of what may be

assumed to have taken place — than it is to recount events exactly as they happened under the particular circumstances concerned.

The Story of Sentoa

Long ago, while still in the age of the ancestors, the Tueng [people] had a *manti*. Titled Kiai Mentimei. That Kiai was the *manti* of the Tueng of [what is now] Lendian [village]. In those days neither would visit the other. From Tueng they wouldn't visit us; we wouldn't visit the Tueng. To Dilang Puti we wouldn't go visiting. From Dilang Puti they wouldn't go visiting to Tueng. Except if you would *roing*. You see, back then, if you said Tueng, that was faaar-away. Dilang Puti, far away. Sambung [neighboring village of narrator], far away.

At that time, news had it that Dilang Puti had a *manti*, too. [Named] Tebolela. Thus Kiai gathered his followers, in order to *roing*. They were not a few people: forty! So they departed from Tueng. They walked for a whole day. Already late afternoon, they encountered a swidden. No people in sight. They continued. Then they came upon a *lou*. They asked: "Is your house under a *pali*?" [post-ritual or other interdiction involving a prohibition to enter] They saw that there was a young maiden present. Covered in *lejon* ringworm [an affliction associated with the *manti*, indicating that she was the daughter of one].[190] "No, there's no *pali*." They ascended into the house. As soon as they got inside the young woman rolled out the *bahau* [grand rattan mat] for them to sit on. They sat down. Then she walked into the *amin* [family compartment]. The next moment she reappeared with offerings to receive the guests. The welcoming offerings of the ancestors were complete with areca palm nuts, betel leaves and tobacco laid out on a brass plate. "There..." she handed it over. "Ah..." they received it. They chewed [betel] and smoked. Then they asked: "Where are your mother and father, where are the others?"

"Out!. Out harvesting fruits, yields of the rivers. Some have gone scoop-fishing. Others are out to collect areca nuts and betel leaves."

"Okay."

She went back into the *amin*. A short time passed. Then she came out again. Said: "Join me, let's go inside." They entered into the *amin*. Four house posts broad, four floor sections deep [unusually large]. A wall covered the entire front and there was a door at the point of entrance. As they got inside they saw that food was laid out in rows. She said: "Drinking water is set out. Ground chili is set out. Rice with condiments."

[190] For some unclear reason, a belief formerly existed among Bentians that the *manti* were particularly likely to suffer from certain forms of ringworm.

Everything was clean and the food had been prepared using spices. They ate. When they had had their fill they went outside. She gathered the plates. Quickly she was finished.

Late afternoon, the peeping sounds of chicks. “I have to go and lock them up [for the night].” She descended to the ground in order to cage chickens. One hundred cages! [indicating an unusually large and wealthy house] Well, she had some caging to do. One over here, another over there. One by one she grabbed them, put them in their cages, and she didn't get them mixed up, even if there were a lot of them. Eventually she was finished. She ascended again. Went to bring water. Four or five times she went to bring water. In the days of the ancestors *betung* and *tolang* [bamboo] were used to fetch water. Well, and some used flask gourds as well.

Already evening, her seniors started to arrive. Arrive, arrive, arrive. A lot of people. Small-talk commenced, connections were established. All sorts of matters were discussed. For the length of that one evening. The visitors told their news, the hosts did likewise. Until it was time to sleep.

After that it was time for her kin and family to gather the followers from other houses. For a *buntang*. Eight days and eight nights. The hosts challenged the *roing* [party]. Treated them as guests. Sprinkled fragrant rice flour water on them and rubbed turmeric on them. Played games and had a good time. Sung love songs and staged dances. When the program was completed they sacrificed water buffaloes, pigs and chickens which were offered to the guests along with valuables. Cloth, blowpipes, gongs and jars. Accepted! Wasn't that what they [the *roing*] had set out to look for? Wasn't this guy [Kiai, their leader] a *manti*?

Then morning came. They ordered the young woman to go and keep watch on a swidden [against marauding animals]. To go to a swidden over there, one which was along the road leading to the village, the very same swidden that had been crossed the other day [by the *roing*]. So she went to keep watch over that swidden. Meanwhile they continued talking and talking. When noon came they packed their things, all that they had received, and then went on their way. The *roing* [party]. When they arrived at the swidden, the *manti* ascended to the house.

“I here climb up to you. Well, I want to take you with me.”

The name of that woman was Sentoa [also the name of some small and agile forest birds].

“Oh, please don't,” she said, “I'm afraid they would be looking for me.”

“That's nothing to worry about,” he said.

Thus they argued back and forth for a while. She lost, that woman. She gave in to the proposal to become his wife. What else could she do, in front of someone so ambitious, so forceful, so cunning. Said she: “Well, it's up to you, if you take full responsibility.” “I take responsibility,” he said. So they went on their way. Across the path they left a blowpipe, unfolded a piece of cloth. In addition left a gong on the ground. A gong which

had in fact just been presented to the *roing* [its usage here therefore being not quite proper, but admirably resourceful all the same]. Thereafter they continued, until they reached Tueng.

Sink the account of the *roing*, float the account of the mother and father, the family and kin of the woman. As Sentoa didn't return in the evening, they became worried. When night came they started searching. Went to the swidden. No, no one there. Then they walked along the road leading in the direction of the guests, the *roing*. Saw that there was a blowpipe across the path, a cloth suspended, a gong. "Oh," they said, "she's been taken away by Kiai, here's the confirmation." They returned [home]. Gathered in the evening. At dawn they went on their way. Forty people as well, including many *manti*. *The manti* [of them all] was Tebolela.

It happened that some people over there were out hunting. Came upon *them* on the path. They quickly ran back to the village. Said: "There is a group from Dilang Puti, many people." Said the villagers: "Ready!" They caught a water buffalo, a bull, in front of the *lou*. Right therafter those others [from Dilang Puti] came. They were going to attack, raid, and so on. Said the *manti* of the village:

"Don't. Mercy. Here, we offer coconut palms to stab, areca palms to stab. Chickens to dart, pigs to spear. A water buffalo to anoint your feet with."

Well, and so they did. Killed the water buffalo and the rest. Only then would they [from Dilang Puti] ascend.

In the evening food was prepared, set out in rows. After they had eaten, negotiations were held. The negotiations led to results, a settlement was reached. A *manti* wedding was to be held, with appropiate compensations according to rank. Teleun Doi, Kawit Siit, Lempang Danan, Batu Anak Jurang Kasai, Seluk Pusu, Lampin Poo [epithets for individual valuables given in compensation: gongs, jars, blowpipes]. Enough! Without even mentioning the other stuff [i.e. those valuables constituting the bride wealth proper]. A gong named Selingur Uet served as the head of the other stuff. Those objects were intended to lift the woman, in compensation for her no longer coming and going morning and evening. Not just for her no longer doing ordinary women's work, carrying and fetching things, working on swiddens, doing housework, and so on. But for no longer making visits and doing things like that, for example, like when there is something for which there needs to be a speech, someone that should be seen about something, participation is required [e.g. in other people's rituals], or when the people have to be assembled.

"Okay." So the negotiations were finished. The yields were brought off. The water buffalo, the gongs and jars with various names. The Dilang Puti people returned. Well, and Kiai stayed in place. With that woman. Time passed and passed but she wouldn't become pregnant: *alei*! [a plant used as a contraceptive drug which may cause infertility]. No children. Well that was the end of that. But the marriage was good, nevertheless.

Extensive swiddens, spacious houses, challenge rituals (*nuak*), communal work (*pelo*): life in consonance with the *manti* profession (*pekerjaan manti*)!

Ambition, Enterprise, and Exchange

Thus ends the first section of "The story of Sentoa" (at this point the story proceeds with some rather different events among some entirely different communities) which I will now analyze at some length before concluding this historical discussion of the *manti*. Sentoa, it is perhaps appropriate to begin by noting, was quite a woman, perhaps not so much in terms of beauty — whether she was beautiful or not is not revealed by the story, only that she had ringworm — but in terms of her other qualities. These included not only those typically associated with women (adeptness in house and swidden work), regarding which an exemplary diligence on her part is imparted through the description of her serving food and caging chickens, among other things, but allegedly also a capacity to perform certain tasks normally associated with men, and with the *manti* in particular, such as assembling the members of the community, representing the family, forwarding important messages, and delivering speeches, characteristics which no doubt reflected the fact that she was the daughter of a *manti*. The latter qualities in particular, the text suggests, warranted her family to request an unusually large marriage compensation for her (in addition to the special, but not unique, circumstances leading up to her marriage),[191] and supposedly these qualities also, along with her other merits, provided some good reasons why Kiai, the *manti* of Tueng, would have wanted her for a wife. Being a *manti* he was in a position to benefit particularly from having such a multi-talented and enterprising partner.

Historically women appear to have played a more prominent public role in Bentian society than they do today — in line with a general trend in much of Southeast Asia (e.g. see Reid 1983). This is true in particular for the wives of the *manti* who were called, at least under certain circumstances, by the special term *ayang*. Women could also become *manti* in their own right and a fair number of women *manti* are reported to have existed up until the early twentieth century. Even though the great majority of the *manti* always was represented by senior men, the occupation was, and is, open to anyone, at least as far as housegroup *manti*ship (the sultan appears not to have granted titles to women, and no woman has, as far as I know, ever occupied the government posts of village and *adat* head). Unlike *belian*ship, *manti*ship is not associated with special initiation rites or the

[191] The occurrence of *sao dala ulun,* "one's wife getting abducted by someone," is infamously common among the Bentian, and it is reported to have been especially common among the *manti* in the past, perhaps for the same reasons (see below) that were effective in motivating Kiai to abduct Sentoa (who was unmarried).

like. Rather, one becomes a *manti* if one persuasively acts like one, that is, leads and represents housegroups, participates actively in community or other public affairs (particularly those that can be categorized as pertaining to *adat*) — and thereby becomes acknowledged as one. In this respect, the Bentian situation is basically similar to that of the Etoro of New Guinea among whom "a man is a *tafidilo* [their counterpart of the *manti*] if people say that he is" (Kelly 1993:18).

The one activity in which a *manti* should engage so as to become regarded as a *manti* that is most extensively described in our story is involvement in that curious institution called *roing*. Some interesting characteristics of it emerge in this description. This form of exchange seems to have been quite conventionalized and formalized (e.g. typically accompanied by ritual) as well as fairly carefully orchestrated in accordance with classical Maussian principles of gift exchange (e.g. ostensibly disinterested generosity, delayed returns, see Mauss 1990) rather than represented as a case of outright trade of valuables (even though bartering between individuals relating to personal transactions could take place "in the background" of the principal activity, in the manner of *gimwali* conducted during *kula* expeditions: see Malinowski 1922). Thus Kiai and his company, when they appeared in Dilang Puti, could expect with reasonable probability to be treated with hospitality, as well as to be offered valuables, even though they were apparently uninvited and had as yet presented nothing themselves; doing such a thing, however, demanded the resources to counter such a prestation on a later occasion, otherwise shame and return of the objects received, and possibly retaliation and fines, could be expected. This fact limited this activity to those capable and brave "men of prowess" (Wolters 1982) who had the means for this — as well as for arranging such an undertaking in the first place. Primary prerequisites for these men were, besides initiative and courage, substantial socio-material resources. Thus, leading *roing* expeditions was a mark of *manti*ship, as was the possession of the valuables acquired through *roing*. The taken for granted association of valuables with *manti*ship is wittily expressed in our story by the narrator's rhetorical question "Wasn't this guy a *manti*?" given as an (unnecessary) explanation as to why Kiai would accept the valuables and set out to *roing* in the first place.

Some other features of *manti*ship suggested by the story are those referred to through the poetic characterization of what leading a "life in consonance with the *manti* profession" entails: "Extensive swiddens, spacious houses, challenge rituals, communal work." These features, which notably characterize the *manti* as compared to ordinary men not so much exclusively as in degree, were proposed by the narrator as examples of the good life which Kiai allegedly was able to lead, despite the fact that his wife proved infertile (which testifies to the fact that children, even though loved and socially important, are not absolutely everything in the Bentian scheme of things; indeed, as remarked earlier, having them cannot be taken for granted). Sentoa's infertility (which

further makes it clear that we are not dealing here with a woman who may be seen as a mere object)[192] nevertheless constitutes something of an anti-climax with respect to Kiai's until then mainly successful appearance in the story; it has the effect of bringing him down to the level of ordinary mortals as it were: he did not get away with just everything. However, despite this drawback, and despite the fact that he had to (but also, could afford to) pay a rather hefty compensation, he fared, all in all, very well, and it is precisely his bold and self-aggrandizing acts as a courageous and "big" man — and hence a *manti* — which provide much of the verve of the story, as they provide also the storyline, technically speaking (it is through *his* actions and the consequences of his actions that the story unfolds). The one act which is ultimately important in this respect is, of course, Kiai's "robbery of Sentoa" (alternatively classifiable as a case of elopement). There is a certain beauty to how events fall his way: a certain grace, to which his *bricolage*-like inventiveness in using some of the valuables that he has just received as token payment for Sentoa contributes.

These observations bring us to something important with respect to how *manti*ship is regarded by Bentians. When I asked people about what it is that makes a *manti* or sets someone apart from other people as one, the answer was usually not any particular kind of qualities or resources such as knowledge of *adat*, wealth or extensive kin networks — indeed when I suggested so, this was sometimes emphatically resisted. Instead, ambition or "will-power," or perhaps more exactly, to borrow Nietzsche's (1968) expression, "the will to power," was proposed as the distinguishing feature of the *manti*.[193] Even though perfectly true in a sense — ambition and zeal were preeminent attributes not only of Kiai, they characterize many present-day *manti* as well — this opinion reflects, it seems to me, not primarily empirical reality, but rather, ideology. These qualities are, in other words, valued in society, and identified as characteristics of the *manti* not so much because they are empirically observable as because they are ideal characteristics. A clear indication of the ideological status of the characteristics in question is the narrator's suggestion that Sentoa gave in to Kiai's "marriage proposal" (which in itself represented ruthless ambition on Kiai's part) because these characteristics attracted her to him ("What else could she do, in front of someone so ambitious, so forceful, so cunning"). A rather simple explanation of this ideological valuation of these features is that they are seen to contribute to making the leadership of leaders characterized by them efficient; it is recognized, in other words, that it is (at least in some contexts) goal-rational for leaders to be forceful and zealous. More significantly, however, it seems to me that this valuation

[192] The fact that Sentoa's infertility was indicated to be the result of her use of a plant used as a contraceptive suggests that she had had sexual relations with other people before her marriage with Kiai.

[193] A word sometimes used in this connection was *kemoyuan* ("desire," "aspiration") typically contrasted with *kemampuan* (I., "ability").

represents what appears as a strand of egalitarian ideology which serves (in a sense somewhat paradoxically) an important role in legitimizing *manti*ship by making *manti* status appear to be justly acquired and theoretically attainable by anyone. And finally, when I say ideological rather than empirical, I do so because of the difficulty to dismiss the fact that ambition alone was probably never enough for the attainment of *manti* status — all those other qualities did matter — and especially not from the mid- or late nineteenth century onwards when social conditions in Bentian society had changed so much that an earlier fairly egalitarian situation — in which the above-mentioned aspect of egalitarian ideology plausibly first developed — had turned into a nearly stratified one, characterized by semi-hereditary *manti*ship.

The Development of the Great Manti *and a Degree of Stratification in Bentian Society*

A fundamentally important effect of the distribution of titles by the sultanate in the nineteenth century was a tendency for *manti*ship to become increasingly hereditary. Gradually, a pedigree including title-holding became almost a prerequisite for claims to *manti* status and the word *manti* came to be nearly synonymous, at least in some usages, with "title-holder." This tendency was not only a development that was aided by the practice of distributing titles, but also one that reflected explicit expectations to this effect by the sultanate (stated in the letters which established the rights of the *manti* to their titles). In addition, such developments as the increasing wealth of the *manti*, and an associated, increasing desire to control "the flow of valuables" in and out of communities — which the *manti*, in their capacities as *adat*-law adjudicators and *roing* leaders, were singularly well-positioned to do — presumably also contributed to the tendency. At the time when the events described in the story took place, this development was likely already under way, at least in some communities. At least one of the two protagonist *manti* was a title-holder (as were a few, but probably not yet very many, *manti* in some other Bentian communities), and they both evidently possessed great — indeed, as the story suggests, unusally great — wealth and social capital. Apart from her afore-mentioned qualities, there is, I suggest, another feature of Sentoa which may explain why Kiai would have wanted to marry her. This is the fact that she was of *manti* descent.

As connections through descent become important, so do connections through marriage. For the great *manti* of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, it was common to marry women from families of other great *manti* from other villages, as seems to have been a dominant pattern among the so-called aristocracy in the so-called stratified Dayak societies (e.g. see Rousseau 1979:226, 1990:89). Even though there does not seem to have existed an explicit rule prescribing rank endogamy, or a practice conforming precisely to this ideal, frequent marriages between *manti* families (both

beyond and, more commonly, within communities) without doubt represented status-consciousness and strategies to concentrate wealth and power. Special *adat* regulations for the *manti* — apparently stipulated and certainly implemented by the *manti* themselves — also served to distinguish the *manti* (or the "real" ones) from other people (high fines and marriage payments, for instance, served to restrict *manti* status to the wealthy). More obliquely, special body gestures by subordinates aimed at expressing respect (in connection with the handing over of cigarettes or other concrete objects, for instance), special seating during rituals (toward the center of events) — and of course, the privilege to give speeches on such occasions — as well as recurrent special mention of the *manti* as a separate category in *belian* chants, are examples of other social institutions serving to set the *manti* apart. Such institutions — most of which are, to a lesser or higher degree, operative still today — reflect a social order which is not entirely egalitarian, and such an order also characterized the Bentian by the turn of the twentieth century, when the level of hierarchy in their society probably reached its height.

Already for some time, the position of leading *manti* for a community had become commonly inherited from father to son, or from older brother to younger, and this pattern continued in the early villages when leadership over entire communites became formally established, as it did with respect to the position of "head of customary law" (*pengurus, kepala adat*) which progressively replaced titulary *manti*ship when distribution of titles by the sultanate ceased towards the end of Dutch rule (the last title was given around 1940). Because of this trend of hereditary *manti*ship, and the previously discussed tendency to rank endogamy and rank-specific *adat* regulations, there would appear to be some grounds to conclude that *manti*ship at this stage had become, besides an individual position or status, a stratum. Another observation adds critical support for such an inference. This regards a tendency for the authority of prominent *manti* to diffuse outwards to their closest family members so that they, too, if only to a degree, become imbued with it, in the sense that they, in comparison with ordinary people, command somewhat more respect, and possibly even compliance (should they request something from someone, for instance).[194] Indications of such diffusion is the (now in some respects

[194] My notions here of diffusion of authority from influential *manti* to their family members resemble, we may note, the South Sulawesian notions of diffusion of *semangat* from leaders to followers (or objects with which the leaders come into contact) described by Shelly Errington (1989). Wolter's (1982:6) contention that by being close to one of the "men of prowess," his followers' "spiritual substance...would participate in his, thereby leading to *rapport* and personal satisfaction" [orig. emphasis], expresses the same idea. Not surprisingly, the appeal or "attracting pull" of particular *manti* among their followers may, as I will explain more fully later in the chapter, also be described by Bentian along similar lines, more precisely, in terms of a spirit-induced "potency" or "ability to rule" (*kekuasaan,* I. or *pengewasa*) possessed by the *manti* in question. When talking about diffusion of authority from leaders to family members here, however, I primarily mean an entirely social process which does not presuppose notions of transmission of any particular substance, tangible or intangible. Notably, I did not encounter any explicit notions about such a process among the Bentian, even though

obsolete) use of the term *ayang* for the wives of the *manti*, and the fact that a *manti*'s brothers may on occasion be referred to as *manti* themselves (even though it is recognized that they are not really *manti* in their own right). Quite naturally, a *manti*'s brothers and other close collateral or older kin will also not consider themselves to be significantly lower than him, or defer much to him. On the contrary, throughout history, outright competition between brothers for *manti*ship has been common and was a major source of fission within families and communities (a famous example is provided by the two *manti* brothers Kakah Pagu and Kakah Pulang who had their two finest water buffalo bulls fight each other, allegedly resulting in their community splitting into two, with each part going different ways to found new villages under the leadership of one of the respective brothers).

Such diffusion of authority to the close relatives of influential *manti* must have become more consequential when community leadership developed and a large number of people, apart from their own kin, became subordinated to those *manti* who became community leaders. At this time, more than before, *manti* authority became something else than kin authority, while simultaneously the relatives of these *manti* — precisely because of their kinship relations — acquired a special "class" position and came to share in a special kind of authority not available (unlike housegroup *manti* authority) to most people in the community. At this stage, then, the notion of an upper stratum in Bentian society would seem particularly warranted. However, such a stratum would only have comprised certain *manti* and their families, and the boundaries by which they were separated — by way of special *adat* regulations and marital relations — from other *manti*, and thus from the rest of the people, were apparently very diffuse, as well as permeable. The term "*manti*" did not really designate a rank but rather a position, or to be exact, several distinct ones. Also, no very clear and formalized ranking system appears to have encompassed the society as a whole. Even though there existed one or several categories of "slaves," and apparently certain regulations restricting them from "marrying up," these restrictions were evidently not absolute, and at least one case reported to me related the transformation of a person's status from slave into *manti*. Unlike among the Benuaq, where a somewhat greater degree of hierarchy developed, no special term for commoners appears eto have been used by the Bentian (my informants did not recognize the Benuaq term *merentika* as having been used by the Bentian). For this reason, and also because of the small difference in general lifestyle between the *manti* and other people (for example, most *manti*, including most community leaders, were not exempted from swidden work), I am uncomfortable with Fried's general claim that the Bentian "possessed an aristocracy, commoners, and slaves," all the more so, as she contends that this was the "traditional" situation, and implies that these categories constituted classes (1995:6).

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they do, as said, associate authority and spirit-induced potency.

In a few large communities, however, and especially in Dilang Puti where Fried worked, there emerged some community leaders who possessed rather exceptional influence, as well as unusually great social capital (including slaves) and wealth. Such great *manti* and their families apparently enjoyed particularly high status, higher than that of ordinary community leaders, in distinction to whom they were sometimes referred to as "*tatau*." Other distinguishing features of these great *manti* were that they with few exceptions practiced polygamy (often with more than two wives) as well as virilocality (which the somewhat special marriage of Kiai and Sentoa exemplifies). Under their leadership, the practices of community and cooperative work (*pelo, beru*) are reported to have been particularly strong, and for their more immediate benefit some amount of corvee labor appears to have been performed, enabling the *manti*'s partial or total disengagement from agriculture (cf. Fried 1995:51). Some *nalin taun* that these leaders arranged lasted several months, bearing further witness to their extraordinary status and socio-economic resources. Their positions, which seem always to have been legitimized by relatively high-ranking sultanate titles, were also particularly likely to be passed on to their brothers and sons as indicated by one of the meanings of the term *tatau* that was communicated to me: "*manti* with *manti* ancestry." Another meaning given for this term, also illuminating, was "*manti* with supra-community influence," a meaning sometimes applied more restrictively to the leaders of Dilang Puti, to whom Fried (1995:51) refers as "paramount chiefs," and who sometime in the early twentieth century acquired the government position of *kepala adat besar* or "district head of customary law" which they still hold today (Titus Pantir 1990:1). One manner in which the largely nominal supravillage authority of these great *manti* is said to have been instrumentally operative was in their capacity as a kind of ultimate authority on *adat*, having a final say in matters that were not resolved on lower levels , as had analogously ordinary community leading *manti*. Throughout history, the role of the *manti* as keepers of *adat* has remained integral to all *manti*, whether *tatau* or housegroup heads: *manti*ship was thus never all about exchange and adventure as the story of Sentoa may suggest.

The actual power of the *tatau*, however, as well as that of other community leaders, was nevertheless somewhat limited; at least, it was always mitigated by other factors. Fried asserts, for instance, that "the *tatau* [apparently referring to both present and past *tatau*] cannot force people to lend land" (Fried 1995:103). In other words, they had no legitimate authority to intervene in what was generally or at least ultimately an internal housegroup affair. In fact, like lower-ranking housegroup *manti*, the community leading *manti* held little *direct* power over people who were not part of their own extended family; their influence over such people was always mediated by the latters' personal housegroup *manti*. The community leading *manti* could thus not do very much without the compliance of these *manti*, and the possibility that the latter and their families could leave the community should they find the leading *manti*'s command unacceptable put

important checks on his authority. Many families who for whatever reasons preferred to keep to their swiddens and forest *lou* were little influenced by the community leaders in any case, whether community members or not.

The fact that the greatest *manti* developed in Dilang Puti and some other relatively large Bentian communities also indicates that the authority and status of the community leading *manti* correlated with the size of the community, as it did with the extent of contact with the government (a factor which itself correlated with community size). Many Bentian communities have been very small, and in such communities, where most people are closely related in multiple ways, no very great *manti*, and so no very great social differentiation between the *manti* and the common people, developed. Generally speaking, no very great hierarchy emerged among the Bentian. This, I hypothesize, ultimately reflects their relative remoteness, dispersion and comparatively limited integration with the larger society. Conversely, that a higher degree of hierarchy developed among the Bentian's downstream Benuaq neighbors — along with a still persisting tradition of weeks-long secondary mortuary rituals (*kwangkai*) and months-long *nalin taun* — can be taken as an expression of the Benuaq's greater residential concentration, greater engagement in trade and more extensive tributary contacts with the sultanate. Similarly, the reported existence among the Benuaq (e.g. see Hopes 1997a:16; Massing 1983) of a "rank" in between the *manti* and the *merentika* called *penggawa* (which apparently encompassed both war leaders and the *manti*'s advisors, and which, like "*manti*," probably did not designate a rank, but a position) presumably testifies to the same thing (and perhaps also to a greater involvement in warfare and headhunting): as in the case of "*manti*," a cognate of the word *penggawa* (*punggawa*) was used as denomination for certain Kutai administrative officials and, in addition, for a category of Buginese military officers associated with the sultanate (see *Dari Swapraja*1979:134; Magenda 1991:7, 22). Presumably, the very same processes that generated stratification in the case of the Bentian — among which we should probably count indirect influence from the Kutai books of law (*adat*) which explicitly ordained ranks and rank endogamy — were effective among the Benuaq, too. Traditionally, the social organization of the Benuaq was probably very similar to that of the Bentian — characterized by dispersed settlement, generally small *lou*, housegroup *manti*ship, etc. — as it indeed still is to some degree.

This leads me to suspect that the Benuaq, who are a rather heterogeneous group, may in fact not have been that different from the Bentian even while they were integrated with the sultanate (or under the command of the Dutch). Probably their stratification system was not as developed in practice, at least not everywhere, as we may be induced to believe by the ethnographic reports, which seem, in many cases, to be biased by an unrepresentative use of high-status informants and the tendency of local historiography to formalize. Consequently, classifying them, then, as has been common in local

ethnographic reports, as stratified, or as a class society, seems to me somewhat unjustified, and it certainly would be unjustified in the case of the Bentian. On the other hand, neither the Benuaq, nor the Bentian, were ever entirely egalitarian, at least not in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, so classifying them by that term seems also somewhat inappropriate. Rather than hierarchical *or* egalitarian, it would perhaps be appropriate to classify these societies as intermediate — or better, indeterminate — entities. At least, it is clear that their social structure, like that of the Kachin of highland Burma (Leach 1954), has been historically, and locally, variant, and that this variation has to a significant degree reflected their historically and locally variable politico-economical articulations with the larger region of which they have been part, a fact complicating a long-standing practice in the Borneo ethnography to categorize the island's societies as either egalitarian or stratified.

*Manti*ship in the Age of Independence

Between the early nineteenth and the early twentieth century, Bentian society underwent a process of increasing hierarchy, involving the emergence of "great *manti*" and incipient stratification. This process coincided with and was stimulated by a process of increasing socio-political integration, affecting both the Bentian's internal and external relations. The latter process of increasing integration has continued and even accelerated since the early twentieth century; the trend of increasing hierarchy has not, however. On the contrary, since the closing decades of Dutch rule, the degree of stratification and the power of the great *manti* in Bentian society have gradually decreased, and the Bentian have become more egalitarian, once again. Several factors have contributed to this development, and like those which earlier gave rise to increasing hierarchy, they seem mainly to consist of different forms of external influence.

First, the institution of slavery died out in the first few decades of the twentieth century as a result of pressure from the colonial government. This, of course, significantly reduced hierarchy by removing, along with the legitimacy of an ideological categorization of some people as lacking full personal autonomy, what might be called the underclass in society. From some point in time it also became "prohibited to pronounce the word slave," so that openly referring to someone's slave ancestry became (and remains) taboo. In addition, the end of slavery entailed a significant loss of social capital for those (actually relatively few) *manti* who had owned slaves. The power of community leading *manti* declined yet more when the distribution of titles ceased and the era of Indonesian independence began. Even though they retained much respect and unofficial authority, these *manti* now lost much of their official authority as their formal status was generally reduced to that of *kepala adat,* a position whose jurisdiction under the national

government is limited to internal communal affairs or such affairs as pertain to customary law or tradition (which the *belian* and *warah* tend to have a lot to say about in practice, however). Formerly, to be sure, the chiefly authority of title-bearing community leaders had also been conceived of in terms of *adat* authority — by the Bentian as well as by the sultanate. Then, however, the *adat* concept was wider and encompassed also that part of the political field in which supreme authority is now held by the village head (*kepala desa*) — to whom the *kepala adat* is also considered ultimately subordinate (even though it was the other way around initially, from the inception of the office by the Dutch in the early twentieth century until title distribution discontinued).

The transfer of power from the *manti* to the *kepala desa* represents a general trend whereby the government has attempted to reduce the power of indigenous leaders and replace it with state power (the institution of *kepala adat* has been described as an office designed to "shelve gracefully the hereditary chief," Rousseau 1990:198). The function of the *kepala desa* is also predominantly one of imposing and regulating national law, that is, it is not to a very high degree "discretionary" in character. Representing the state, however, the *kepala desa* is authorized to call on the police to enforce his command, and he is also in a position to invoke the agency of the subdistrict head (*camat*) — prerogatives which indeed ensure a certain authority for the usually fairly young, literate and modernization-minded men who hold the post. The *kepala desa* may, for instance, defer unresolved, intracommunity social conflicts to the government. As has been noted by Peter Just (2001:126), and demonstrated at length by Anna Tsing (1993), in the Indonesian periphery the government and the police are typically not very interested in intervening in such affairs, but the threat of reporting some matter to them nevertheless represents a frequently employed means of persuasion at the disposal of village heads, as well as of elders, and even of ordinary villagers lacking the formal legitimacy to handle such matters.

Despite their reduced official responsibilities, however, the *kepala adat* and other *manti* continue to wield considerable informal authority, particularly in the sphere of *adat* and with respect to conflict resolution. By far most conflicts in the villages are dealt with internally; like the Dou Donggo of Highland Sumbawa (Just 2001:126), Bentians are loath to assign legal matters to the government because its principles and procedures are largely unknown and uncontrollable; also, reporting unresolved matters to the government suggests that they are not capable of maintaining order on their own, thereby motivating government intervention which is generally resented for fear of loss of local autonomy. Typically, conflicts are dealt with in formal but unofficial hearings involving several *manti*, often, but not necessarily, the *kepala adat.* If not settled through this procedure, they may be taken to the *kepala adat* to resolve in his official capacity, in which case the resolution of the affair is nevertheless still likely to involve collective deliberation by several *manti* (as it did in Udin's case), even though it is the *kepala adat*

alone who makes the final, registered verdict. Many types of more or less formalized public negotiations — in which the *manti* tend to be the principal speakers (and become regarded as *manti* largely as a result of being so) — are presently identified by Bentians as *musyawarah* (I.), a concept advocated by the government as an aspect of *Pancasila* ideology, and this kind of consensual decision-making obviously represents an indigenous ideal among the Bentian too.[195] Apparently, it was observations testifying to the frequency or importance of such gatherings which induced Weinstock (1983a:116) to describe present-day Luangan leadership as "fluid and shared among the senior members of the community," a description which also alludes to the fact that among the Luangan, including the Bentian, important decisions of communal concern tend to be made collectively by people who mostly occupy no official leadership positions. Even though probably always important, such forums may, as a result of postcolonial structural transformations of official local leadership and influence from the political culture of the Indonesian government, have become somewhat more important today than they were during the heyday of *manti* power in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Quite certainly, a manifest egalitarian ethos which currently informs many Bentian attitudes towards social life reflects postcolonial influence, even though this ethos no doubt also in part represents an older ideological substratum, one which presumably predates integration with the sultanate. Among the more recent influences promoting such dispositions we should count not only official injunctions imposed by the government, but also what might be called revolutionary nationalism, for example, those early republican-nationalist slogans which stated that, in the age of independence, everybody should "sit equally low, stand equally tall" (*duduk sama rendah, berdiri sama tinggi*, I.), thereby implying that all old hierarchies, whether "feudal" or colonial, should be eradicated.

Despite these trends, however, some present-day *manti* clearly enjoy higher status than most other *manti*, and these *manti* also tend to be particularily influential in their communities. Today as well, if the meaning of the term "*manti*" is requested, it is usually "community leader," or alternatively, *kepala adat*, that is given as an answer, even though the word is also used in the sense of "housegroup head" and "adjudicator" (an example of its use in the latter sense is Udin's letter in Chapter 3 in which he refers to the elders who imposed a ban on him from leaving the community as *manti*). This semantical primacy of *manti* with supra-housegroup influence, or what some of my informants referred to as "the real *manti*" (*manti bene*), undoubtedly reflects the historical heritage of the era of the community leading *manti* — "when the *manti* (or at least some of them)

[195] Interestingly, Just (2001) translates *musyawarah* as "consensus," a translation indicating the strong association between such meetings and a consensus orientation that seems to exist throughout Indonesia.

really were *manti*" — but surely also the importance of official positions for legitimate authority in the present situation. In the present situation, government regulations, even though much contested in private, have assumed an unprecedented validity, or at least pertinence, among the Bentian, and official authority possesses a special legitimacy, enforced as it is by government law. Thus there are, despite the disappearance of the great *manti*, significant differences in authority and status between those people who are referred to as *manti* today, and not all of them are equally likely to be regarded as *manti*.

Three Present-Day *Manti*

In order to give a more concrete picture of *manti*ship in the present situation, I will now present three *manti* who were among those whom I came to know best during my fieldwork. Apart from exemplifing *manti*ship today, this presentation serves to illustrate the diversity of the *manti* and to draw attention to the variety of factors which are constitutive of *manti* authority, many of which I have already discussed, but some which I have not and which I will analyze in some detail after this presentation. The discussion of *adat* and government authority which will conclude the chapter will provide still more information on some crucial factors constituting *manti*ship. Conversely, when discussing these subjects, I will refer back to aspects of my *manti* examples.

Ma Bari

Ma Bari was the roughly seventy years old man in whose *lou* I lived for most of my fieldwork, and with whom we already became acquainted in Udin's story. Ma Bari was the widely recognized but unofficial leader of Temiang. Temiang being officially regarded as a hamlet of Datai Munte, his formal status was only that of "neighborhood head" (*ketua RT*), a position which annoyed rather than pleased him. On account of this position he was often invited to Datai Munte for official meetings but rarely went except when they specifically concerned Temiang or it stood in his obvious interest to do so. However, when he went he was treated with respect by the villagers and as an equal by Ma Busek, the *kepala adat* and principal official leader of Datai Munte (which lacked a *kepala desa* at this time). This respect, I presume, was due to him in large part in recognition of his status as a leader, and also, out of respect for (albeit not in actual acknowledgment of) his community's claims to sovereignty. In practice, Ma Bari's status was very much that of a community leader, both in and out of his community.

His status as a community leader derived (at least in his own community) in no small part from his ancestry from its founders, and from the fact that he owned and occupied the "grand *lou*" (*lou solai*) of Temiang — the village's center where most larger rituals and *adat* meetings were held. Equally important, he was Temiang's foremost *adat* expert, its unofficial *kepala adat*. He was the one who would initiate lawsuits (*perkara*) and most consultative meetings (*musyawarah, berinuk*) in Temiang. Descending from the founders of the village, there was also plenty of land in his custody over whose cultivation he would be consulted in his capacity as informal *kepala adat*. In addition, he was centrally positioned in the overlapping kinship networks of the villagers, a fact further adding to his relevance in their lives and thus providing him with plenty of social capital. Together these properties were enough to make Ma Bari the most obvious candidate for leader in Temiang, and indeed highly qualified as such.

However, the authority of Ma Bari, which was remarkably apparent (i.e. in how people treated him), could not be understood without reference to what might be regarded as his personal charisma, more precisely, certain aspects of his demeanor as expressed in interactions with people. His soft but clear voice, his utterly slow and deliberate movements, his steady gaze — all contributed to give him a composed and commanding outlook. Albeit thin and frail, and rather short, his presence was always strong. Predominantly serious — making jokes and showing feelings mainly in the company of his grandchildren — his appearance usually meant business, not play. He was also regarded as being just and righteous, as well as "responsible" (*bertanggung jawab*, I.). He sometimes seemed rather grim to me, but he obviously represented a moral ideal. If use of the concept is justified (see Anderson 1972, 1990), Ma Bari really had "charisma," even though of a somewhat particular kind.[196]

One quality of Ma Bari which critically contributed to his authority, as it did to a greater or lesser degree for every *manti*, was his skills in using the "language of the ancestors," the indirect, highly metaphoric and parallellistic mode of communication characteristic of *adat* negotiations and other formal discussions, including the *belian* chants employed for communication with spirits. These language skills were of course an aspect of Ma Bari's active practice of *adat* leadership which had refined them. But he also employed them upon opportunity outside this context, thereby, apart from demonstrating his suitability for *adat* leadership, making his words and views authoritative in his interactions with people.

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[196] Anderson (1972) criticizes the use of the charisma concept (including Weber's own) as "reifying" (thus, as entailing the mystification, rather than the elucidation, of what it purports to describe), for which reason he resorts to putting the word in quotation marks. More specifically, Anderson (1990) also points out that Weber's understanding of charisma is "acultural" and "suprahistorical," involving a notion of a phenomenon independent of the norms and ideas existing in the particular societies in which it arises, a notion which is "very difficult to fit with the overwhelming bulk of the ethnographic and historical record" (1990:81).

Another characteristic of Ma Bari that I noticed was his tendency to utter explicit commands or other forms of what Searle (1976) termed "directives," a category of speech act which Michelle Rosaldo (1982) has explored in depth among the Ilongots. Quite often I witnessed him sit down with one of his two sons or one of his grandchildren or their husbands (including Udin), and occasionally someone in his own generation, in order to "order them to do something" (*siu*), for example, build a canoe, go hunting, make a swidden in some particular location, or stay in place. He would also sometimes, more in passing, so to speak, issue commands, prohibitions or instructions addressed to various named persons during his occasional "evening monologues." This behavior served to tacitly confirm his superiority over those individuals at the same time as it enabled him to exert the influence expected of him as a *manti*. In addition it served to confirm his *manti* status in another, more straightforward respect, since commanding people, like using ancestral language, is something which especially the *manti* do.

Despite that it was largely through observation of Ma Bari that I came to think of the *manti* as people who issue frequent commands, we would not get the correct overall picture of him if we were to think of him as someone who was particularly eager to order people around. On the contrary, Ma Bari was clearly less characterized by a propensity to utter directives than some other *manti* were (including, apparently, some past "great *manti*," who were described in precisely such terms). It was largely as a result of the fact that I lived in his *lou* and saw him daily for much of my fieldwork that I made the association. Outside his own house, Ma Bari would, in fact, give explicit commands only rarely. In lieu of his reputation as the leader of Temiang, he was also often absent on many "public occasions" (i.e. rituals), even when most of his fellow villagers were present, and when he was present, he tended to keep quiet, except when he was called upon to make speeches. Even in his own house he would generally talk little, and he was always subdued. Despite this low profile, however, he was very obviously respected, even in his absence. In contrast to what most people had to put up with, no jokes or depreciative talk about him ever seemed to occur behind his back. I also never witnessed anyone contest his view or authority in any matter, whether in his presence or absence. Ma Bari, in the spirit of Weber's (1978:53) understanding of the word, generally demonstrated his authority precisely by not having to use it.

The most powerful expression of the respect and authority attributed to Ma Bari which I witnessed was the extensive collective concern demonstrated when he suddenly got seriously ill in June 1996. Ostensively suffering from stomach pains, sometimes making groaning sounds from within his mosquito-net, where Bentians who get ill tend to stay secluded for most of the time, the precise scientific nature of the gastro-intestinal or other somatic disorder from which he suffered remained unknown to me. That the condition was serious soon enough became evident to everyone, however, as he stopped eating and continuously got weaker despite a series of curing rituals that were quickly

arranged for him. An unusually large number of people took part in these rituals, and many participants, including not only the patient's closest relatives, seemed more affected than usual under such circumstances — talking little, appearing sad and miserable — the general mood being palpably gloomy. The efforts to cure Ma Bari culminated in a prolonged *buntang* lasting two weeks (for an extended analysis of this ritual, see Herrmans n.d.), into which several "self-sufficient" curing rituals were integrated. Together with the previously arranged curing rituals it made him the object of three weeks of uninterrupted ritual activity (and immediately before he got sick, another *buntang* had been held by another family in his house, adding further to the length of continuous ritual activity in the village). In these rituals all in all over a hundred people, including relatives of Ma Bari and other people from neighboring Datai Munte, participated for at least part of the time, and many stayed and slept over for much of the time in Ma Bari's *lou*. For most Temiangers, ordinary life was to a greater or lesser extent suspended for this period, many not being able to leave the village despite plans to the contrary — I myself, for instance, was requested not do so — because of the notion that extensive participation contributes to the success of rituals. Through both the extent and intensity of the participation, and the amount of animal sacrifices made in the attempts to cure him, it was obvious that Ma Bari's health was of genuine as well as noncompulsory concern for virtually everybody in Temiang. In part this reflected the importance of his relations with individual villagers, but it also reflected the fact that he had in a sense become symbolic of Temiang, with people sometimes referring to it as his community. The village's well-being, including its possibilities of ever achieving its long-desired autonomy from Datai Munte, was regarded as being contingent on Ma Bari's well-being, a fact which also reflected the dilemma that he had no clear successor candidate or, at least, that the most obvious one (Ma Lombang) was not considered satisfactory by all. Plans were even made to hold a *nalin taun* for Ma Bari, indicating that the problem at hand was indeed regarded as being of community concern. Ma Bari started to recover just prior to the completion of the *buntang*, however, being able to sit up on its last day, and although he got completely well and could begin to walk about only months later (a consequence, possibly, of the fact that his son-in-law brought a government health worker to medicate him) the conclusion of the *buntang* facilitated a relative disengagement from the affair for most people affected.

Ma Lombang

The next *manti* whom I will discuss is Ma Lombang, a man who like Ma Bari was introduced in Chapter 2 (occupying several roles in Udin's story) and discussed again in Chapter 3 in the capacity of the *manti* who led Ma Mar's *buntang*. After Ma Bari, Ma

Lombang was Temiang's second ranking *manti*. In the 1970's, while Temiang was still indepedent, his older brother Ma Resa had been a village head (*kepala desa*) and the most high-ranking *manti* of the community, a fact which contributed to Ma Lombang's self-image and his ambitions for *manti*ship.

Ma Lombang was known as a very keen *manti*, too keen, in many people's opinion. He took every opportunity to speak at formal and informal gatherings, and his wide kin network ensured that there were plenty of such occasions. He was also the most senior *warah* ("death shaman") in his community as well as in neighboring Datai Munte, and so he was fairly often called to lead *gomboks*. On these occasions, too, he would love to speak along with the host and other *manti*. Like Ma Bari, whose senior he was by a few years, Ma Lombang was well-versed in the "language of the ancestors." In many respects, however, Ma Lombang was the opposite of Ma Bari. His loudness and assertiveness contrasted starkly with Ma Bari's quiet and reserved comportment. It seems to me that his behavior in this respect did not serve to augment his authority. On the contrary, it was probably counter-productive, and in combination with the fact that he often wore traditional dress (loincloth, headcloth) it even made him an object of ridicule among some people, particularly among the youth of Datai Munte where he frequently went, not only on duty as a *warah*, but also sometimes in place of Ma Bari as a representative of Temiang, or for various more private "business" ventures. It seems to me that what authority Ma Lombang had, rested not so much with his appearance as with his "objective qualities," that is, with what beyond anyone's doubt he knew and had mastered in terms of death rituals, water buffaloes, customary law, local history, and people's kin relations — which undeniably was a whole lot. His own practical kin connections as well — besides his theoretical knowledge of others' kin relations which he had acquired as a *warah* — was extensive, and formed another important factor generating authority for him, if not always a similar degree of respect (see Fig. 1 for an illustration of some of Ma Lombang's kin relations).

The foundation of Ma Lombang's kin connections, in its turn, rested not so much with the objective extent of his kin relations (which was not that unusual, in a small community which had been strongly endogamous for a very long time) as with his eagerness to engage with and thereby bring these dormant relations to life. He did, for instance, a remarkable amount (considering his age) of what Tsing (1993:130) calls "traveling politics," a practice which she identifies as essential for the authority of the Meratus counterparts of the *manti*, visiting relatives and attending rituals both near and far in order to keep up his relations and ask his relatives for services or offer them his. As a family *manti*, Ma Lombang was indeed very influential, even though he did not possess a *lou* of his own, nor did he usually have many relatives staying under the roof of his single-family village house, which was located next to Ma Bari's *lou*. Compensating for this, however, *he* went to live with his relatives: an ambulatory elder

now staying with his son (Ma Bure), now with his present wife's grandson-in-law (Ma Bubu), now with his first wife's grandson-in-law (Udin), now in his cousin Ma Bari's *lou* (where various of his relatives periodically resided). Beyond residential connections and the fact that he was primarily associated with the upriver part of Temiang where his house was and where he had married two sisters of Ma Bari in succession, Ma Lombang also, as seen in the previous chapter, played quite an active role as a *manti* for many people in the downriver part of the village, including his late brother's children, Nen Bujok and Nen Pare, and their husbands, Ma Putup, Ma Mar and Ma Sarakang (the last-mentioned also Ma Lombang's sister's son), as well as Nen Pore (Ma Sarakang's wife before Nen Pare) and Nen Pore's older brother, Ma Unsir (Nen Bujok's husband before Ma Putup) — a role which was motivated by the fact that he could claim — directly or indirectly — a position as *puun* to each and every one of them, as he could with respect to Ma Bubu and Udin as well.

Another important factor explaining this "downriver orientation" of Ma Lombang in Temiang (in addition to the genealogical connections) was precisely his association with Ma Bari's house which meant that he could not wield as much influence upriver as he would have liked without contesting the recognized superiority of Ma Bari — which he never did, even though he eagerly stood in for him when given the opportunity, such as on the occasion when Ma Bari was ill, during which he assumed a conspicuously active and visible role in leading most collective proceedings in the village. Inter-*manti* competition thus contributed to Ma Lombang's downriver orientation at the same time as it reduced his influence in Temiang as a whole; on the other hand, his influence in downriver Temiang was aided by the lack of a strong *manti* in this part of the village (since Nen Pore's father, Kakah Unsir, was no longer respected as such because of his age and mental condition, and none of the middle-aged men associated with his *lou* yet exhibited much inclination to act as *manti* themselves).

By being actively involved in the affairs of the people of the downriver part of Temiang at the same time as he himself was primarily associated with the upriver part, Ma Lombang also occupied a kind of intermediary position which enabled him to perform an important integrative function for the community by binding these somewhat detached sections of the village together. Although considered to sometimes act in his own interests (e.g. by relying on the food resources of the younger relatives among whom he interchangeably stayed), it was nevertheless obvious that Ma Lombang generally acted — and did a lot — for his relatives and the common good. He also did much to make his relatives and fellow villagers (who were, mostly, in one way or another, his relatives) behave as kin toward each other. In Michelle Rosaldo's (1980:68,182) words, Ma Lombang really "knew kinship," that is, to use a terminology applied earlier in this study, knew and respected the meaning of "kinship as a moral code," striving to make his dependants and villagers in general act in accordance with the "twin principles of respect

and reciprocity" constituting it. To give a few examples, Ma Lombang frequently took part in *perkara*, *musyawarah* and other more informal gatherings, where he worked to resolve and prevent interpersonal conflicts. He also took a distinctively active interest in trying to integrate "outsiders" in kin networks and the village as a whole, such as myself and Ma Putup, the idiosyncratic *belian* discussed in Chapter 3. In addition, as our previous encounters with him indicated, Ma Lombang often arranged *buntangs* and other rituals, and he took, as befits a *manti*, a very keen interest in marriages and weddings (in fact, he played a leading role both in the preceding marriage negotiations and the practical arrangements of each of the three weddings that I witnessed during my fieldwork). In all of these ways, Ma Lombang epitomized important aspects of what it means to be a good *manti* — serving his kin and his community — which still somehow was not enough, however, to grant him full respect by all, or a status similar to that of Ma Bari.

Ma Busek

If Ma Lombang was a lower-ranking *manti* than Ma Bari, then Ma Busek, the close to seventy years old *kepala adat* of Datai Munte who led the lawsuit against Udin, clearly was a higher-ranking one (which is not to say that he necessarily was the more highly esteemed, however). Ma Busek occupied a real government post (in a real village several times larger than Temiang) and was in that respect, unlike Ma Bari and Ma Lombang, a "real *manti*" (*manti bene*). In the absence of a *kepala desa* in Datai Munte (a result of disturbed relations with the subdistrict administration who had discharged the former office holder and not yet appointed a new one), Ma Busek was also the village's principal official leader, and no doubt — even though his authority was contested by many — its single most influential *manti*. In addition, Ma Busek represented the third generation of a series of distinguished *manti* who had led Datai Munte for over a hundred years. Before him, two of his significantly older brothers had acted as the two previous *kepala adat* (which during their time in office was still a post superior to that of *kepala desa*), and constituted two of the very last title-holding *manti* in the Bentian area. Before them, his father, and before him, his grandfather, had acted as renowned title-holding community leaders. Ma Busek's legitimacy to his post — and his authority in general — derived to a considerable degree from this circumstance. In fact, many people said that they had not wanted him to get the job; contrary to the currently proper procedure, he had, I was told, not been elected to it, but just assumed it upon the death of his older brother. Significantly, however, people had not dared to speak against him, precisely, some of them said, because of his ancestry, which thus served to authorize, if perhaps not fully legitimize, his occupancy of the post even in the case of those who were adversely disposed to his leadership.

Ma Busek's ancestry authorized his position in several different ways. In the first place, it made him entitled to it, regardless of whether or not he was popular. Albeit most influential in the era of the great *manti*, notions which postulate that leaders should be of *manti* descent and succession to leadership hereditary still retain, despite influence from government-prescribed administrative procedures and "anti-feudal" nationalistic ideology, a certain degree of popularity, and may even be attributed status as *adat* or legitimate tradition, at least by some people. In the second place, something about Ma Busek, which I think was mainly his ancestry, instilled in most people (with the exception of a few other *manti*) considerable respect, or perhaps, awe, as a result of which they tended to be more or less uneasy in his company, and would at any rate not speak against him. This "attitude of deferral" was, I assume, due in large part to the kind of general and diffuse uncertainty which seems to be more or less universally experienced by inferiors confronting superiors. More specifically, however, it probably also reflected fear of *bunsung* (misfortune provoked by lack of respect), a sanction which primarily applies to junior-senior relations but is transposable to relations with the *manti*, who even when not their subjects' "trunks" (*puun*) are still regarded as a kind of elder. To some degree, the largely hereditary deference that Ma Busek aroused also seemed to derive from his custodianship of the ancestral valuables (*pusaka*) and "regalia" (*semerem*), believed to be associated with powerful protecting spirits (*pengiring*), that he had inherited from his predecessors. Interestingly, it was precisely through the deceitful acquisition of some such objects, his opponents told me, that his ancestors had originally acquired their *kekuasaan* (I., "ability to rule") and subsequent *manti* status.

However, even though much of Ma Busek's authority directly or indirectly reflected his ancestry, not all of it did. Another important factor which greatly contributed to it, and probably contributed to keep him in power as well — even while it simultaneously formed a major source of discontent with him — was his real and perceived connections with the government and the "outside world" in general, including some timber and other companies (*perusahan*) that operated in the area and were themselves to an important extent associated with the government, acting as "development agents," *pembina desa*, on its behalf. During my fieldwork, he would spend much of his time on the veranda of his modern-styled house looking out for cars — trucks or jeeps — from the nearby transmigration and logging company camps that would possibly arrive at the village. Not only had he some important business connections in these places, he had many relatives resident there as well. It was here, too, that his general interests were, rather than with traditional village life or forest-related subsistence activities (in fact, I learned later that he had moved there). His worldly as well as spiritual orientation were to the outside world. Like many other Bentian *kepala adat,* Ma Busek was a (former) school teacher (the families of high-ranking *manti* have usually been among the most well-educated among the Bentian). Like most present-day *kepala adat*, he was also a Christian. As a

kepala adat, however, he was nevertheless rather special. He openly held Kaharingan practices and so-called traditional life in general in very low regard, and he even claimed extensive ignorance of local culture. In a speech that he made during a *gombok*, for instance, he professed, rather outrageously, not to know the destination of the two souls of the dead that are escorted to their "afterworldy abodes" during the ritual. Clearly, he did not really know as little as it may have seemed. Part of his ignorance was undoubtedly insincere and political: he wanted to appear ignorant, thereby demonstrating his "forwardness" (*kemajuan*, I.) and lack of respect for the old and primitive ways. This, in its turn, reflected the fact that he was, like the New Order government, intensely development and modernization oriented. He wanted to see the culture and ways of life of his people radically transformed, and he supported the development projects conducted by companies in the village among whose goals were getting the villagers to engage in government/company sponsored cash crop cultivation or other labor activities, and gradually give up swidden agriculture.

By holding the kind of views that he did, it was of course to be expected that Ma Busek would be supported by the government, and indeed he was, at least by its closest local allies, the timber companies. This probably also contributed to the respect that he commanded as well as made it seem unrealistic that he could be discharged from his post (particularly when considering the government's at that time largely uncontested authority and influence over local affairs, and the local presence of police and army personnel known to be loyal to the companies and their causes). However, Ma Busek's views in this respect simultaneously made him unpopular with most villagers, a majority of whom did not share them or at least not affirm them to a similar extent. Partly for this reason, his authority was also much contested, especially in issues where there was significant disagreement with him, but also more generally outside the sphere of customary law, in which his expertise as a *kepala adat* was squarely located. For instance, Ma Busek was not very succesful in getting villagers to pen their pigs or tie up their water buffaloes, despite continuous efforts at "instructing" (*mara*) them about the importance of such things on public occasions. Similarly, he generally failed in trying to force villagers to keep their *gombok* rituals short and in accordance with the schedule so that they would not interfere with various work activities (or the celebration of Independence Day — something which would have been very inappropriate in his view). And he could not prevent a large number of villagers from resisting the nearby logging companies' claims to land over which these villagers held traditional rights. In his absence, people also frequently opposed him or tried to work against him. Thus his authority was clearly limited, despite the attitudes of deference that he aroused.

In the field of customary law proper, on the other hand, Ma Busek clearly held a good deal of authority, particularly of a certain legal-rational kind, in Weber's sense. He was experienced and astute, having presided over a large number of legal cases in the capacity

of his office, and these qualities seemed, despite his unpopularity otherwise, generally appreciated by the villagers, as appeared to be the case with his judgments in such affairs, too. Thus, even though he did not know *adat* in general, he knew customary law, and through his practice of it he had acquired a capacity for conflict resolution, which is a task regarded by Bentians as one of the most essential of the *manti*. Nevertheless, this did not suffice to make him popular (albeit it did contribute to legitimize his position as *kepala adat*) in large part precisely because he did not know — and, more importantly, did not respect — *adat* otherwise. By doing such things, for example, as demanding, during a *buntang* held to welcome a mining company to the village, that the water buffalo to be slaughtered, for reasons of safety, be killed straight out and not, as in the *adat* way, tied by a long rattan rope to a *blontang* sacrifical pole and allowed to charge against its spear-sporting killers, it was argued that he did not have the ancestors' support, a principal source of legitimacy and authority in Bentian society.

Probably more decisive for Ma Busek's unpopularity, however, was another sense in which he "did not know *adat*" (*beau tau adet*), namely on account of not consistently acting in accordance with basic moral values and the best for his community, and thus not as a good *manti* should. According to the most serious allegations, he had sold out his community by taking bribes or compensation in exchange for granting the logging companies rights to community lands, which, when implemented, had involved the destruction of some villagers' rattan gardens. According to widespread opinion, he generally put his own interests first, and many considered him deceptive. He was also conspicuously wealthy but perhaps not equally redistributive. It was impressions such as these which represented the most frequently voiced expressions of discontent with Ma Busek, and probably also the most basic source of his unpopularity. Indeed, should opinions about his moral character have been different — or should he at least not have taken the companies' side against villagers in some matters — his other shortcomings might well have been overlooked.

Moral Virtue and Social Worth

I shall now turn to a discussion of factors which are constitutive of *manti* authority, drawing particularly on my *manti* examples. A factor which is especially well-illustrated by these examples is something which might perhaps most concisely be referred to as social or collective worth. As in the case of the elders carrying out much of the informal leadership of Ilongot local groups (cf. Michelle Rosaldo 1980:185-88), there is a basic assumption regarding the *manti* that they are in a sense, or should be at least be, caring for their subjects or "children," using their superior knowledge (which is largely, but not entirely, a function of seniority) to prevent conflict, promote cooperation, and generally

organize local life in accordance with the common good and an ideal of community harmony. This assumption pertains to those *manti* who are community leaders as well as to those who are housegroup heads (for the latter not only in the sphere of the family but also beyond as they are expected to contribute to community leadership). Precisely this factor can also largely explain the high esteem enjoyed by Ma Bari and the ambitious involvement of Ma Lombang in interpersonal "politics," even though his personal interest in enhancing his *manti* status was regarded as another impetus in this respect. Conversely, Ma Busek's perceived failure to work for the good of a substantial part of his community deprived, for the very same reason, him of much of his authority and potential esteem.

The existence of these notions regarding the role of the *manti* has some profoundly important consequences in Bentian society. First, to borrow Raymond Kelly's (1993) phrase, it contributes to a "fabrication of a hierarchy of virtue," and second, largely as an effect of the first consequence, it serves to legitimize the position of the *manti*. In a study which is very useful for an understanding of the Bentian, Kelly (1993) has drawn attention to the importance of differential moral evaluation (as opposed to, for instance, differential access to wealth) in the construction of inequality among the Etoro of Papua New Guinea. It seems to me that what I here call "social worth" performs a function rather similar to the aspects of virtue that he investigates among the Etoro, that is, it facilitates social differentiation by way of differential moral evaluation. The superior status of the *manti* is predicated upon the assumption that they are somehow more virtuous than ordinary people, more precisely, on account of having provided more for them than *vice versa*, or more than they have provided for their community (the emphasis here shifts according to whether we are talking about housegroup heads or community leaders). As is the case with the Etoro, generosity is a central component of the Bentian "system of moral evaluation." In contrast to the Etoro, however, among whom the contribution of leaders consists primarily of "normative life-force donations" (Kelly 1993:478), the contribution of the *manti* is most essentially made up, as is apparently that of Ilongot elders, of what might be called social knowledge or "kinship knowledge," that is, knowledge of the kind that I attributed to Ma Lombang above. In other words, the *manti* contribute not so much to life in general as to *social* life. Unlike the Etoro case, it is not the "cosmological system" which forms "the source of morally evaluated social differentiation" among the Bentian, and thus "the locus of social inequality," but rather a more secular, politico-ontological value-system embodied in *adat*. By contrast, however, the morally elevated position of the *belian* can be seen as largely cosmologically derived, and based on contributions of "life-force" or health. That said, the legitimacy of the authority of the *manti* is nevertheless much perceived in an idiom

of nurturance and parentage (or rather, grandparentage),[197] a fact which does not lack justification, many *manti* having concretely "provided for" (*molum*) those people whose "trunks" (*puun*) they represent.

At its base, then, the authority of the *manti* is very much a moral authority, legitimized by what they do or are expected to do for their subjects in the capacity of being particularly knowledgeable and skilled for the purpose (e.g. on account of their speaking skills which form a principal instrument of conflict regulation and the organization of cooperation). Intimately associated with it is a notion that their services should benefit the common good as opposed to more narrow personal or kin interests. In this respect the *manti* resemble the leaders and legal experts of the strongly egalitarian Tiruray of Mindanao, the *kefeduwan*, regarding whom there exists, according to Schlegel (1970:61-64,122-23), an ideal that their goal is not to try to win legal cases on behalf of their followers, but rather to work collectively toward making everyone's "gallbladder good" — a formulation which literally applies also to the Bentian, among whom "a good gallbladder" or *aseng buen,* metaphorically designates "good feelings" (and is stated as a general goal of a wide range of activities, including *perkara*). Such a notion of the common good is likely rather ancient, even though it may have been reinforced by at least two centuries of influence from precolonial, colonial and postcolonial governments which have prescribed community leadership and greater local integration. Like the notions which postulate that the proper social order dictates that there should be some people set apart from others who are to specialize in the regulation of social affairs (i.e. as *manti*, or *kefeduwan*), this notion may well derive from a deep-seated and empirically corroborated assumption as to its necessity or advantage given the conditions associated with the way of life of the peoples discussed.[198] In other words, there is what could be called a value-rational basis of *manti* authority, a kind of ontological foundation embedded in social practice, upon which its legitimacy ultimately rests. I am thinking here particularly of the "inchoate and shared understandings on which the diffuse reciprocity of daily living depends," which, in Michelle Rosaldo's (1980:177) conceptualization, is something with which senior Ilongot men's knowledge of social life resonates, thereby authorizing their interpretations of it. But such a hypothesis is supported also by Peter Just's (2001:129-31) conclusion regarding Dou Donggo elders' (*doumatuatua*) authority which he says is principally made up not of traditional or charismatic (or legal-rational) authority (although it is, he notes, to a limited extent composed of all three Weberian authority types), but on the *doumatuatua's* "ability to

[197] This also holds true in respect to the authority of the ancestors, to whom the Bentian consider that they owe their entire existence.

[198] I am referring here to such conditions as the material basis of kin relations, and the density of overlapping kin ties.

evoke and invoke values deeply held and broadly shared" (i.e. "collective representations"). Since this, as he infers, can be said to make *doumatuatua* authority "more Durkheimian than Weberian," his conclusion adds yet further support for my notion of the value-rationality of *manti* authority. In my view, *manti* authority, like the authority of ritualization, rests ultimately upon certain basic relation-affirming values or, in two formulations of Durkheim's, "the moral community," and "the authority of society" (see Durkheim 1995).

With the institution of *manti*ship basically representing a kind of moral leadership, it follows that the moral qualities of individual *manti* should form a measure of their suitability as *manti*, as was indeed the case with the three *manti* discussed above. Also relevant in this respect is the moral performance of the *manti* outside their strictly defined official or unofficial offices, such as Ma Bari's tendency to engage extensively — despite his age and frailty — in physical work activities, especially swidden work, a tendency which much affected, and in a sense legitimized, his somewhat limited participation in some public events. Ideally, a *manti* should form a model of moral conduct, and it is an advantage if he can act as a provider beyond the sphere of social knowledge. Preferably, he should also — at least in small communities where a greater degree of social differentiation never developed — be one of the people.

Given the centrality of moral virtue, "disinterestedness," or perhaps more to the point, "a style of disinterestedness," is an advantageous quality of a *manti*. A *manti* should ideally not, at least not ostensively, act out of self-interest (virtue and self-interest may go hand in hand, and quite often do in these kinds of redistributive moral economies, but this should not become too obvious). Hence it is not, for example, legitimate for a *manti* to hold a *buntang* only to aggrandize himself (indeed, discussions with informants established that even inauguration of leadership may count as a somewhat improper motive in this respect), there should, at least officially, be some other motives as well, such as repayment of debt to spirits for recovery from illness or compensation to the spirits for illicit marital unions. A factor which contributes to this ideal of disinterestedness is that the *manti*, as custodians of *adat*, are regarded as representing the ancestors, and the proper and most persuasive way of appropriating the latter's authority is deferential and self-depreciating conduct. Since the ancestors represent a moral ideal, intimately associated with all the good that they have done for their descendants, ancestral authority is itself to an important degree a kind of moral authority, rather than just a form of "traditional authority."

Against this background, Ma Bari's low profile of leadership was seen as a merit, indexing his disinterestedness and ancestral connections, and thereby contributing to much of the palpable respect and extensive authority that was given him. The problem with Ma Lombang, on the other hand, was that — despite his frequent references to the ancestors, and his efforts at promoting the best for his community and community

members — his loud and assertive style was all too assuming, and his ulterior motives too manifest. His style of leadership and appearance did not confirm his virtuosness, nor persuade of his ancestral support, even though his extensive traditional knowledge in various fields was invaluable to Temiangers. Ma Busek, finally, represented a case apart, being rather at odds with the notions of moral virtue and social worth discussed here. Denouncing ancestral tradition, he made it clear that his authority was not ancestral in the sense outlined here, although his personal ancestry did augment it. His leadership, however, demonstrates that a *manti* must *not* base his authority solely on moral performance; indeed, other qualities may complement the latter, and are to some extent requisite for all *manti*.

The Spiritual Aspect of *Manti*ship

Whether or not someone succeeds as a *manti* is dependent on many factors. One factor is what we might call "the spiritual aspect" of leadership. As Bentians see it, in order to have an ability to rule, a *manti* needs, in the first place, to have the spirits' support, or in Christian Bentians' views, God's. Lacking an ability to rule, or otherwise failing in his *manti*ship, he is likely to be regarded as lacking the spirits' support. Such a notion of the spirits' support may primarily represent a form of speech, a way of explaining successful or unsuccessful rule retrospectively. But it is about much more than that. Indeed, the ability to lead is to some extent considered to represent spiritual agency in itself, more precisely, help from the *manti*'s personal protecting spirits, or those of his *lou* or of his village. Many of the spirits offering such assistance are associated with the various ancestral objects (*pusaka*) described in Chapter 4, including the *longan*. Some of them are associated with some particular pieces of ancestral objects (e.g. small wooden figurines, strangely formed pieces of wood or stone, etc.) which are called *semerem* and expressly identified as being endowed with a capacity to facilitate or promote leadership. As already mentioned, it was specifically through the acquisition of certain *semerem* that Ma Busek's ancestors were regarded as having originally obtained their *manti* status, indicating that the possession of certain objects may sometimes — at least in Bentian discourse — be decisive in enabling *manti*ship. Some spirit associated ancestral objects (particularly tiger or clouded leopard teeth and the ancestor skulls) may be useful for the *manti* in a very specific way, namely, as paraphernalia during *perkara*, in which case they are known as *penyentuhu*. In this context these objects primarily serve the function of sanctioning the judicial process, particularly selected aspects of it such as oath-taking, in connection with which they are employed to punish deceptive participants (cf. Hopes 1997b:95-99 for such use among the Benuaq; Peranio 1959:8 and Rousseau 1988:82-82 for the use of animal teeth for oaths elsewhere in Borneo). However, these objects may

also be used during *perkara* with the covert and somewhat illegitimate purpose of "making one's own party win" (*ene pihak nyawa meneng*).

Semerem, *penyentuhu* and other objects associated with spirits are said by Bentians to have *kekuasaan* (I.) or *pengewasa,* a word which I have already glossed as "ability to rule" but which is sometimes, such as in this context, better translated as "magical power" or "potency." As noted above, Bentians apply these terms also to powerful *manti*, in which case "authority" (besides "ability to rule") probably renders their meaning more accurately. The association between these somewhat divergent meanings of the terms, and the association between the different types of referents that they involve (*manti*, objects, spirits), serve to make manifest the spiritual aspect of *manti* authority. They also suggest an important reason, in addition to various social purposes, for the *manti* to arrange *buntang* rituals which is that the protecting spirits demand regular ritual attention including, in particular, *ulas*, feeding in the form of anointment by blood from the sacrificial animals, in order to release their beneficent influence.[199] Something which also points to the spiritual aspect of *manti* authority is the fact that the hardness of a *manti*'s soul (*tokeng juus*) may be regarded as causative of, or at least as covariant with, successful rule. However, in Bentian discourse, the pursuit of potency revolves not so much around the accumulation of soul or soul stuff (cf. Errington 1989; Kruyt 1906), as around the accumulation of protecting spirits (especially *naiyu*).[200] Yet another indication of the spiritual aspect of *manti* authority is perhaps the now obsolete notions — implicated in the story of Sentoa and recorded by Knappert (1905:625) — that it was seen as characteristic of the *manti* to suffer from certain forms of ringworm.

Having *kekuasaan*, however, is not only about potency and the support of spirits. Although it typically has some "mystical connotations," what is often described when this term is used with respect to a particular *manti* is something which approaches what Max Weber had in mind when he wrote about "charisma." In other words, perceived "authority" or "ability to rule" is reflected in aspects of the *manti*'s appearence, his manner of being and acting. This is a kind of "spiritual authority" as well, in another sense of the word, and it is by no means unrelated to the first type; indeed, it is often the *manti*'s appearence (particularly if combined with the storage of potent ancestral objects and the sponsoring of frequent or lavish rituals) that suggests that he has the spirit's

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[199] *Belian*s and *manti* typically being different persons, we do perhaps not have as clear-cut a case here as among such peoples as the Etoro or Dou Donggo (Kelly 1993; Just 2001) among whom the political or secular leader is typically also a spiritual leader — or such peoples as the Wana and Meratus (Atkinson 1989; Tsing 1993), among whom the shaman is often a political leader — but spirit support nevertheless forms a factor of some importance in Bentian understandings of the constitution of *manti* authority.

[200] As already indicated, however, the state of having many protecting spirits is nevertheless closely associated with the state of having a hard soul, making too rigid an attempt at separating these conditions from each other is misleading.

support. The concept of *tokeng juus* or "a hard soul" may also be used, like the Indonesian/Malay word *semangat* ("soul"), to signify certain characteristics of a *manti*'s appearance — e.g. fortitude, composure, zeal — which suggest that he has authority. As in the context of gift exchange, there is clearly a connection here between "the social" and "the spiritual," or between psychological characteristics and perceived supernatural ones. This was of course realized by Max Weber as well, who saw charismatic authority as typically associated with perceived magical power.

One *manti* whose appearance I already claimed was an important factor contributing to his authority is Ma Bari. In his case, I proposed that certain aspects of his demeanor bestowed upon him a special dignity which made him authoritative. Indeed, it seems to me that through them he exhibited — in his own somewhat drab and rustic way — many features of the prototypical behaviour of the regents of "traditional" Southeast Asian polities. For him, as for such figures, traits like silence, stillness, and non-action were probably functional in addition to characteristic. They conveyed calm, containment and control, and generated an impression of effortless authority (cf. Anderson 1972; Errington 1989; Geertz 1980). Rather than a connection with royalty or other forms of external authority, however, Ma Bari's charisma indicated being at one with the ancestors to Temiangers. By contributing to his "low profile of leadership" they contributed to the impression that he had the proper attitude for appropriating their authority.

Ma Bari's authority, then, was not merely moral, but also charismatic, and the two aspects worked to mutually reinforce each other. In the case of other *manti*, the situation was quite different. Some did not obtain their authority from moral performance, although most would do so, to a degree, at least, within the group of their most immediate kin. Others, in their turn, did not seem particularly charismatic, and those that did often displayed a different kind of charisma than Ma Bari. Many, like Ma Lombang, were undoubtedly charismatic in a sense (exhibiting certain traits in extreme or manifesting characteristics unusual in society), even though their charisma may not have been very effective in enhancing their authority. Ma Busek could also be said to have possessed a certain charisma, at least his personal presence tended to be met with conspicuous deference. Preconceptions regarding his person which reflected his ancestry, on the one hand, and his office and connections with the outside world, on the other, may perhaps have been more instrumental than the actual traits that he exhibited, but certain aspects of his behaviour certainly contributed to the deference that he inspired (as an indication of this, his slightly younger brother did not begin to arouse a similar measure of deference). Central amongst these aspects of Ma Busek's behavior were an apparent fearlessness and self-confidence. He behaved as if he expected people to automatically comply with him. As another side of the same thing, he seemed rather arrogant and generally uninterested in other villagers and what they thought. To give an example, during a wedding ceremony that I witnessed, Ma Busek, in the presence of all the guests

gathered, straightforwardly asked the hosts, with whom he was not closely related, for a portion of smoked game (i.e. "private food," distributed by hunters to relatives and neighbors, not food served during ceremonies), a demand which few would have had the confidence to make in such a situation, even though there exist some notions that the *manti*, as community benefactors, are entitled to demand a little more than other people, and which indeed represented somewhat inappropriate behavior. Such conduct served to confirm the "preconceptions" that his ascribed status involved (i.e. by making him appear as somehow above other people), thus making it acquired to an extent.

Manti status is of course, on the whole, generally acquired, and ambition is, therefore, to some degree a necessary quality of all the *manti*. An excellent example in this respect is Ma Lombang's *puun* relations which clearly were established much as the result of his own agency. As this example also indicates, *puun* status itself is always to some degree subject to negotiation, as is the case with inherited status as well.[201] Theoretically speaking, everyone simultaneously has a multitude of *puun*, and the concept may, as Ma Lombang's example illustrates, be "stretched" (if that is an appropriate concept here) to apply also to affinal *puun*.[202] In practice, however, only a few of one's potential *puun* will function and be regarded as one's *puun*: those who are willing (and called) to take the social responsibility — which implies that the concept should be seen as a metaphor for social parentage as much as one for genealogical progenitorship. As I noted in my analysis of the story of Sentoa, a discourse on ambition also legitimizes *manti*ship by making *manti* status appear theoretically attainable by anyone having the will to power. As I pointed out in that context as well — with reference to the example of Kiai — ambition is frequently regarded as a positive feature of the *manti*, even though it clearly is not always so, as Ma Lombang's case shows. The fact that ambition or a will to power is sometimes regarded as a positive feature of the *manti* whereas at other times it is not points to a contradiction in how Bentians valuate *manti*ship. It seems that there exists two opposite types of charisma that a *manti* can favorably exhibit: one, exemplified by Kiai and, to some extent, Ma Lombang and Ma Busek, centered on fortitude, zeal and, sometimes, wealth, which is typically associated with notions of spiritually endowed potency and soul strength, and another, displayed for instance by Ma Bari, centered on such behavioral features as composure, dignity, and deference, which is typically

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[201] A somewhat similar argument has been put forward by Michael Vischer (1996) in a discussion of the concept of precedence as a principle organizing hierarchic relations between territorial domains. In this context as well, Vischer demonstrates, *puun* status, associated with dominant territorial domains, is negotiable, and significantly influenced by social as opposed to strictly genealogical considerations. For similar findings with respect to Highland Balinese "ritual domains" (*banua*), see Reuter (2002).

[202] The term of "stretching" is appropriate here only in so far as the *primary* referents of *puun* are genealogical ascendants. However, if the primary referents are social providers or caretakers instead, or if both types of referents are equally primary, then it is, of course, misleading.

associated with such recognized attributes as *adat* knowledge, ancestral support and moral virtue. This, by itself, makes it clear that *manti*ship is not a homogenous insitution, and in particular, that the profile of different *manti* may be very different, and that their authority can be very differently constituted.

Authoritative Speech

An important aspect of a *manti*'s ability to rule is his language skills, particularly his ability to use the "language of the ancestors," an ability which Ma Bari and Ma Lombang had developed extensively. As argued in Chapter 4, use of this language — which is marked by stylistic devices such as metaphor and parallelism, and a generally "roundabout" (*mengkelotes*) mode of expression — tends to involve the adoption of a special, authoritative code distinct from everyday speech. It is most fully developed on certain, formal occasions — whose formality it much contributes to — including, on the one hand, religious rituals, in which the *belians* and *warah*s are its principal practitioners, and, on the other, lawsuits (*perkara*), consultative meetings (*musyawarah*), and other occasions belonging to the sphere of customary law, within which it is the *manti* that principally employ such language. Customary law being essentially about conflict resolution or conflict prevention, the characteristic indirectness of ancestral language is in this sphere particularly useful in enabling indirect address of sensitive issues, a property commonly associated with legal language and oratory in the Southeast Asian ethnography (e.g. Keane 1997:135; M. Rosaldo 1980:194,198; Schlegel 1970:67). However, ancestral language may also be incorporated into everyday speech and used in unmarked informal situations, something which especially the *manti* (more so than the *belian*s) are prone to do. Like the North Sumatran "authoritative maxims" studied by Bowen (1991:139-168), such instances of ancestral language use (which prominently include proverbs) tend then to be "set off from surrounding speech through pauses and special intonation contours" (1991:144). In further correspondence to these maxims, they will in such contexts function as what Bowen (1991:143, paraphrasing Dell Hymes 1981) calls "breakthroughs into authority," lending the speaker and his statement the authority of something transcendent of the situation (e.g. ancestral tradition).

Apart from ancestral language, other aspects of language use may also significantly contribute to a *manti*'s authority. In the case of Ma Busek, his profuse use of Indonesian and the vocabulary of the state administration served this purpose, as it did in fact with respect to most *manti*, albeit usually to a more limited extent. In the case of such language as well, "breakthroughs into authority" were achieved or attemped (often rather ineptly) in much the same way — and style — as they were in the case of ancestral language.

Another somewhat different example of language use which I mentioned in connection with my presentation of *manti* examples is the rather frequent performance of what Searle (1976) called "directives." I am thinking here, in particular, of the making of commands, which is something that I identified as contributing to *manti* authority, an observation conforming to Rosaldo's finding that Ilongot "'inequities' are articulated and negotiated by the social uses of commands" (1982:208). The effectiveness of this practice among the Bentian may be better appreciated if it is noted that by "making commands," I do not mean just any instance of issuing what is by implication a command, but a very particular way of making an in all respects very transparent command. Like "asking someone for something" (*sake*), discussed in Chapter 3, "ordering someone to do something" (*siu*), represents a "framed" activity in Goffman's (1974) sense, something much more than an instance of language use only analytically separable. *Siu*, like *sake,* is a social institution emergent — emically and etically — as a distinct activity in the predominantly undifferentiated flow of other activities, a special form of action characterized by a distinctive blend of formalization and straightforwardness. *Siu* is usually performed according to a fairly standardized process, one which is followed closely in the case of *sake* as well. The person who issues the command will typically directly face the addressee, usually seated on the floor in front of him, and often after having gone to meet him — or better, having sent for him — indicating that he has something on his mind. At the heart of this framed activity — frequently initiating it — is a typically short and clearly articulated sentence which in condensed form constitutes the command, syntactically constructed so that it begins with the first person pronoun followed by the verb which defines the activity as a whole, as in *aap siu ko Lodot na nontong boias la aap* ("I order you Lodot to bring me rice") or *aap siu ka tia na nyangkum belian la ume Ma Kerudot* ("I order you 'children' to attend the ritual at Ma Kerudot's swidden").[203] As in these examples, this sentence also tends to address the recipient(s) of the command explicitly (typically by use of the second person pronoun

[203] In this and most other above respects, *siu* and *sake* contrast to a significant degree with Ilongot "commands" (*tuydek*) and "requests" (*bege*). Among the Ilongots there is apparently no comparable social institution in which directives are performed in a similarly salient, formalized and straightforward way. Rosaldo also noted that "Ilongots ... tended to correct my efforts to perform directives that began, 'I forbid'..." (1982:216), an observation which certainly would not hold true among the Bentian (as my examples of the use of *siu* indicate). Interestingly, she attributes the disinclination for such language use among the Ilongots to a "general reluctance to assert unequal bonds in words," a reluctance which is not present among the Bentian to the same extent, even though they are probably not radically less egalitarian than the Ilongots. Rosaldo's findings nevertheless permit her to suggest that "where the Ilongots may differ most significantly from ourselves [i.e. in terms of the use of directives], is that, for them, *overt direct formulae are not construed as harsh or impolite* [orig. emphasis]," an observation that also struck me among the Bentian. This observation she interprets — insightfully and with great relevance to my Bentian material — as reflecting the fact that Ilongot "directive use is seen as having less to do with actor-based prerogatives and wants than with relationships affirmed and challenged in their ongoing social life (1982:216).

combined with a kinship term, the addressee's personal name, or his teknonym), a feature functioning to further facilitate its reception.

One very interesting consequence of *siu* is that by commanding someone, one in effect puts oneself in a position in which one has the right and the ability to command the other person. Performing *siu* is therefore clearly not appropriate for just anybody; juniors will certainly not command their seniors, at least not if in a generation above them (a similar status asymmetry is not implicated by the use of *sake*, which thus, unlike *siu,* forms a status-insensitive directive).[204] Indeed, performing *siu* is appropriate mainly for the *manti* and other elders, and particularly when they stand in a *puun* relation to the recipient of the command (although the latter is not an absolute requirement for a *manti*). Thus "ordering someone to do something," like making commands in general, is a relative privilege of the *manti* (and of elders), and as such, I argue, it plays an important role in manifesting their authority — and thereby, in Rosaldo's (1982:208) terms, in "articulating and negotiating inequity" (i.e. in constructing it). In fact, like such conventions as recurrent special mention of the *manti* as a separate category in *belian* chants, *siu* appears to me as a good example of the kind of routine everyday practices that Bourdieu (1977) and phenomenologists regard as instrumental in inculcating people's sense of the order of things, including, as in this example, the social order.

Along with *siu* there are a number of other directives which typically are used by the *manti*, and which like *siu* presuppose status asymmetry, and arguably, reproduce it. These include *matuk,* "to instruct," and *klamen*, "to forbid." *Matuk* is often performed in much the same formalized way as *siu* and *sake,* the idea here essentially being that the *manti* or elder who is doing the instruction shares his knowledge or gives valuable advice about some particular subject or more concrete concern to the less knowledgeable or well-advised recipient of the instruction, who in this case is likely to be significantly younger than the instructor. *Klamen*, in its turn, does not represent so much of a separate, framed

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[204] Unlike *siu*, which is mainly used by the *manti*, or by seniors addressing juniors, *sake*, or "asking someone for something," is typically used among status peers or by inferiors addressing superiors. Besides their differing "status-sensitiveness" — reflecting the different degrees of "politeness" by which they address the recipient and to which they seem to presuppose his or her compliance — there are, we may note, some additional features of *siu* and *sake* which may help explain their contrastive use. As seems to be the case among the Ilongots, commands typically regard services whereas requests predominantly regard objects (see Michelle Rosaldo 1982:224-25). Commands also, as Rosaldo notes, tend to require, in contrast to requests, physical movement by the recipient, and she notes also that they tend to be "concerned with finite, easily realized sorts of labor" (1980:224). Against this background, it becomes further clear why *siu* is particularly typical of the *manti*, and *sake*, by contrast, represents a more "egalitarian" directive. The *manti*, who organize and sponsor man-power demanding work and ritual activities, are typically in particularly great demand of services, especially of such services which involve physical labor (which they themselves, being old, are able provide only a small amount). Ordinary people, on the other hand, tend in relative terms to be in need particularly of objects and material resources, while the *manti*, in their turn, typically possess more objects and material resources than others (and are expected to be able and willing to disburse of such assets to a greater extent as well).

activity in its own right (but, even though I did not witness it performed as such, I surmise it may well turn into one on occasion). Prohibitions were, however, rather frequently and ostentatiously voiced by the *manti*, and it seemed to me that even more often than they forbade someone something, many *manti* made statements as to the effect that they *did not forbid* someone something, thereby nevertheless making an implicit statement that it stood in their power to issue a prohibition, but without putting their authority to test as they would have done if they had actually made one.

Framed performances of directives are not the only special institutions in Bentian society whereby a *manti* may establish his status by speaking. Several other ones are at least as prominent, and formalized. I am referring here to the speeches (*presa*) made in connection with weddings and religious rituals, including Christian ones, as well as various other public happenings, including those associated with the Indonesian government. But I am thinking also about the somewhat less formal, but nevertheless formalized, "monologues" that the *manti* perform typically in the evenings and among their most immediate kin, addressing miscellaneous concerns but especially work and other everyday activities. Finally, I am thinking about all those formal gatherings expressly convened to deal with matters pertaining to the field of customary law, in which most *manti* present typically express their opinions or otherwise speak at length about the matters discussed.

In all of these situations the *manti* will put into use more or less — depending on the formality and social importance of the occasion — their special language skills, typically employing aspects of ancestral and government language extensively and eclectically, and commonly adding hierarchic directives for instrumental or expressive effect. Their potential success in establishing their authority is very much a function of how well they perform in this respect, and so is the influence that they may or may not be able to exert. This becomes particularly clear if we realize that the *manti*, like Tiruray or Dou Donggo leaders (Schlegel 1970:66; Just 2001:116), have no absolute coercive power, lacking the possibility to employ legitimate force in order to compel compliance with their opinion or even with their verdicts in *perkara* (recalcitrant offenders may be threatened with submission to the government authorities, however). What power they have may in fact lie, as Rosaldo (1980:177) has observed it to do in the case of Ilongot elders, less in the actual regulation of social life than in its interpretation. Through the above-mentioned prominent public occasions, however — in which talking skills are central — the *manti* do enjoy a relative monopoly in defining social reality, or in Kelly's (1993:508) formulation of Etoro leaders' prerogatives, "in the social construction of situational realities." Like the authority of ritualization, *manti* authority can thus be characterized as largely "performative." As such, however, we should not depreciate its importance. As among the Etoro, "[e]ngendering shared perceptions of a social situation is conducive to collective agreement concerning the course of action to be followed" (Kelly 1993:508).

Hence, the *manti* are indeed in a rather strong position to influence social life, even though their power, in a strict sense, could be characterized as limited.

The Authority of *Adat*

Speaking and speech-making are factors of central significance in the constitution of *manti* authority. No matter how skilled a *manti* is in expressing himself, however, in order to be compelling and authoritative, *what he says* must also make sense to his listeners. In other words, not only the form, but also the content of his speech matters, as do the implications of his statements, which preferably should appeal in some respect to the listeners, or at least, be acceptable. What this means, basically, is that the *manti*'s speech — and his other actions — should be compatible with certain preconceptions that his listeners have, including not only their basic understanding of the world, and their notions of what's right and wrong, desirable and undesirable, etc., but also, their views about the exigencies and practical possibilities applying in a given situation. In a general sense, this is very much a question of correspondence to basic values, of value-rationality (although efficiency, or goal-rationality, is also a factor). A *manti* is supposed to regulate social life in accordance with such universally acknowledged values as unity, concentration, respect, and reciprocity, and he should, preferably, act in accordance with the ideal of social worth outlined above, as well as in a way suggesting that he has the "spirits' support" (e.g. by exhibiting such features, expected particularly of the *manti*, which indicate that he has *kekuasaan*).

Now, a good part of these basic values, which are central among the "preconceptions" with which *manti* action should be compatible, come down to essentially one thing, namely, *adat*. *Adat*, in other words, is largely congruent with what I earlier referred to as the "secular politico-ontological value-system" that forms the source of morally evaluated social differentiation among the Bentian.[205] Being, as I have proposed, "the perhaps most sanctified of all Bentian notions," *adat* obviously is highly authoritative.

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[205] As my characterization of *adat* as a "secular politico-ontological value-system" may indicate, I do not, in contrast to much scholarship in Southeast Asia, regard the religious dimension of *adat* as overwhelmingly important. In particular, I am somewhat uneasy with a notion of *adat* as "cosmic law" (see e.g. Hopes 1997b:4). Even though Bentians perceive that *adat* is protected and created by the celestial *seniang*, and that human action, in the case of transgression of *adat,* may adversely influence conditions in nature, there is no good reason to suggest that Bentian *adat primarily* serves to preserve a cosmic order, and even less so, that it is concerned with, as a popular scholarly argument has it, maintaining a *balance* between people, on the one hand, and supernatural forces, on the other (see e.g. Hudson 1972:45; Walker 2002:21). Rather, *adat* among the Bentian primarily represents an institution of social law concerned with regulating interpersonal relations (which to some extent is supported by supernatural sanctions) . Only secondarily is *adat* concerned with relations with supernaturals, this being predominantly the field of *belian* (ritual).

Claiming that something represents or is consistent with *adat* is a powerful argument, and hardly any Bentian, no matter how modernization-minded, would openly admit to opposing *adat*. Even though what represents *adat* in a given situation is in fact frequently contested or unclear (cf. Tsing 1993:152), there is in Bentian public discussion an almost universal and strong consensus as to the acceptedness of *adat*: though one may debate what *adat* is or should be, that one should abide by it is taken for granted.[206] As Tsing also notes, "assumed in *adat* talk is the compelling nature of *adat*'s authority for all those under its command" (1993:128). A basic reason for this sanctity and the authority of the concept is the deeply rooted values for which it stands.

The *adat* concept has several slightly different, but related and overlapping meanings, all of which are relevant to the Bentian in different contexts. Perhaps most essentially, however, *adat* stands in Bentian conceptions for customary law and the associated practice of plate exchange. As such, *adat* contains the rules and standards which make up what is perceived as an indigenous legal code, and its institutionalized application by the *manti*. Now, various instances of tradition and custom are also — as is commonly the case throughout the Indo-Malaysian region — referred to as *adat*, particularly those to which the rules of this legal code apply, even though these instances are perhaps not *adat per se*, strictly speaking: they *are adat*, not in themselves, but in the sense that they conform to, or are prescribed by, *adat* rules. Such instantiations of *adat* include a very wide range of customary behavior: farming and forest-use practices, ceremonial procedures, various formal and informal interactional routines, etc. Not just any instance of customary behavior represents *adat*, however: there is far from a perfect fit between *adat* and tradition. Strictly speaking, only *authorized* tradition, that is, custom validated by *adat*-law, qualifies as *adat*. This is something which was several times pointed out to me by my informants, who in order to illustrate this point typically made a distinction between *adat*, on the one hand, and *kebiasaan* (I., "habit," or "unsanctified custom"), on the other. Essentially the same distinction was documented for the Tiruray by Schlegel (1970:28) who in addition mentions a couple of other qualifications as to what counts as *adat* proper, valid both among the Tiruray and the Bentian. As he observes, only such customary behavior which is "normative," i.e. which "includes the idea of 'ought,'" and which "bears upon respect for other people" (or for spirits, we should add) represents *adat* (Schlegel 1970:28). Consequently, such practices which are of no moral and social consequence such as idiosyncratic personal habits are not *adat* in the sense outlined here.

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[206] A good example of the authority of *adat* in this respect, valid for the Bentian as well as the Kayan, is what Rousseau (1990:196) among the latter has identified as a "sense of finality of judicial [i.e. *adat*] decisions. An illustration of this sense among the Bentian is Udin's consideration of the *manti*'s decision to prohibit him from leaving Temiang as incontestable (expressed, for example, in his letter, in which he noted that "the way to proceed is already closed, there is no way out anymore").

What the above-mentioned properties of *adat* indicate is that *adat*, as a legal system, is not just any random collection of time-established tribal truths and precedents handed down by the ancestors, but rather an institutionalized morality — and a set of congruent practices aimed at regulating social life in accordance with this value-system. Roughly the same point has also been made for Indonesian *adat* in general by Clifford Geertz who criticizes the Dutch ethnographers who codified *adat* for misrepresenting it as mere custom, as "at best quasi-legal, a set of traditional rules traditionally applied to traditional problems" (1983:208), when it in fact represents, in his view, an "indigenous sense of justice as social consonance," aspired to in practice through adjudicative procedures serving to enact — and exemplify in themselves — "publicly exhibited social agreement" (1983:209-10).

Taking Geertz's observations a little further, it could be argued also that *adat* authority does not as much represent "traditional authority," as it represents what I have called value-rational authority, and this is also a point that I want to make here, congruent with my conclusion of the value-rationality of *manti* authority. In my view, the sanctity and persuasiveness of *adat* do not primarily reflect the authority of the past or precedence, but rather, as Schlegel (1970) and Just (2001) have argued for Tiruray and Dou Donggo customary law, the degree to which it corresponds to — or to which its practitioners succeed in making it correspond to — the basic morality and the shared, taken for granted values of the society. In the Bentian case, these values consist mainly of the same relation-affirming social values that I identified at the heart of kinship ideology and ritual. In other words, it is being in resonance with these values, including that of community harmony, that Bentian *adat*, as an institution essentially owes its authority. However, *adat* should not be seen as a mere epiphenomenon of these values. As a set of practices, made up of the various consultative and adjudicative meetings led by the *manti* and the ubiquitous system of plate exchange,[207] *adat* largely functions to celebrate and thereby strengthen them.

Besides expressing morality, *adat* also promotes morality, thereby contributing to create the preconditions of its own authority. One thing which it obviously does in this respect (through *manti*-led negotiations as well as plate exchange) is promote cooperation and coexistence by way of regulating socially disruptive sentiments. *Adat* thus serves also in a very concrete way to maintain the society whose values it promotes. Another very important effect of *adat* is that it promotes what could be described as a particular "moral economy" among the people under its command: a mode of exchanging resources

[207] Plates are, as already noted in Chapter 3, distributed on a wide variety of occasions which are conceived of as belonging to the sphere of *adat*. Most importantly, they provide the principal currency in which compensation is paid in connection with lawsuits and marriages as well as that in which various rewards (*upah, temai*) are given for ritual work and other forms of valuable assistance between kin.

and services guided by such principles as respect, reciprocity, and responsibility.[208] The most persuasive evidence for the existence among the Bentian of such a moral economy is the system of plate exchange, which the Bentian are known to practice particularly actively. The fact that Bentian *belian*, *warah*, and *manti* are usually paid in plates, and not in cash as I was told that their counterparts nowadays predominantly are among other Dayaks in southern Borneo, represents one instance of how the Bentian adhere, not only to an "*adat* economy," but also to an associated moral economy, which in the case of their allegedly less traditional Dayak neighbors, representatives of these groups complained to me, has been largely replaced by one associated with cash economy.[209] The Bentian's relative predilection not to sell game but to distribute it, typically widely, among their relatives and neighbors, on the other hand, and statements (by Bentians, as well as outsiders) such as "if you go to Bentian, you don't need to pay for rice" (*aser ko la Bentian, beau nek moli nahii*) indicate that their adherence to this moral economy is by no means restricted to those formalized exchange procedures which constitute the *adat* economy, but that it represents a much wider phenomenon including various, typically informal, exchange activities, which make up the "everyday redistributive economy."

The Bentian's *adat* economy can thus be observed to go hand in hand with — and it no doubt helps to sustain — a general kinship orientation, or in other words, a commitment to what I have glossed as kinship ideology (which is something that may pertain to relations with non-relatives as well as relatives, providing that they are close). Such a kinship orientation seemed central also to what Bentian and non-Bentians alike had in mind when they characterized the Bentian — which they often did — as clinging strongly to *adat*. The Bentian's extensive use of kinship terms for address (said to have become much more restricted among their neighbors), together with their practice of what I have called a moral economy and the comparatively great general "respect" (*hormat*, I.) that they are known to show their relatives, represented commonly proposed examples to this end. In a sense, kinship is also what *adat* is all about: if there is an ultimate aspiration embodied in *adat,* it is an aspiration for all social relations to become like kin relations as they are ideally conceived: persistent, reciprocal, and respectful. Conversely, there is in itself really no such thing (i.e. an ethno-domain) as "kinship" among the

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[208] Respect, in the sense of interpersonal respect, is also identified by Schlegel (1970:28-29) as something which *adat* among the Tiruray basically serves to sanction. Even though this is true also for the Bentian, even more fundamentally than it promotes respect, *adat* among them (and perhaps among the Tiruray, as well) seems in my view to promote interpersonal connectedness, that is, the maintenance of relations.

[209] I heard reports describing this situation for Benuaqs and Teweh Luangans, as well as for the Ngaju. Presumably it also pertains elsewhere. For the Ma'anyan, Hudson (1972:45) notes that *adat* payments were mainly made in cash already in the 1960s.

Bentian: in so far as the ideology which I have proposed that it consists of is expressly attributed to something, it is to *adat*.

Engaging Adat

So far, I have been painting what could be characterized as a rather rosy picture of Bentian *adat*. According to this portrayal, it is an institution which expresses and serves to promote a number of basic, relation-affirming moral values as well as a moral economy, and it succeeds remarkably well in doing so, judging from the Bentian's comparatively strong adherence to *adat*. In essence, we may note, this is a representation little at odds with an old-fashioned functionalist analysis — particularly of a Durkheimian sort.

As with ritualization, the picture is not entirely that simple, however. Even though *adat*'s existence and its practical application in Bentian society functions to give voice to and no doubt also to some degree to promote a particular morality — what I have called a moral economy — the importance and use of the concept and institution in Bentian society can certainly not be explained by reference to moral orientation alone. In the first place, the Bentian, being only human, do not always follow *adat*, and there is not an *adat* for every situation. More importantly, even when they follow *adat*, they do so not for the sake of *adat* or tradition alone, or because of having been pressed to do so by their moral conscience, but for a multitude of highly varied motives, only some of which could be characterized as moral or relation-affirming, and some of which are outright divisive or otherwise contrary to the spirit of *adat*.

In an important sense, *adat* does not exist unless it is activated. Whether in its aspect as theory — comprising various directives, interdictions, maxims, etc. — or as practice — made up of formal negotiation, adjudication, and ceremonial exchange — it is only when it becomes engaged, that is, when called upon or put into operation in practice, that it really affects people. Similarly, only then is the authority of *adat* taken to authorize something, whatever that may be. Thus the lives of Bentians do indeed, despite occasional indigenous statements to the contrary, take place to some extent outside *adat*, which could be described figuratively as a certain frame that people may or may not choose to superimpose on what takes or has taken place.[210]

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[210] This, as I suggest, is my observation; as local ideology has it, there is really nothing outside *adat*. Even nature is said to follow *adat,* although in this case it is not Bentian *adat,* but the *adat* of natural phenomena. In a way, this ideology has the effect of naturalizing *adat*, making it easier to accept it by making it seem inevitable, and thus contributing to its authority. However, it would nevertheless be a mistake to accept it at face value. Not only is *adat* often uninvoked; conditions often arise which breach *adat*, and in so far that no one invokes *adat* in order to redress such conditions, they may well abide.

The fact remains, however, that the Bentian quite frequently impose this frame over their affairs: quite often references to *adat* are made and a social problem submitted to *adat* negotation, and remarkably often formal speeches by the *manti* and ceremonial exchange of plates are part of events. Why? What is it that *adat* is taken to authorize on such occasions — and how is it it taken to authorize it? Why the urgency to call upon *adat* in such circumstances — and why is it that it is authoritative then? In one respect, all of these questions have to some degree been illuminated, namely, indirectly through discussion of *manti* authority. The intimate connection between the institutions of *adat* and *manti*ship — like the Tiruray *kefeduwan*, the *manti* are not just any self-chosen leaders, but leaders conceived as such essentially in their capacity as legal experts (Schlegel 1970:58) — together with the necessity for the *manti* to actively establish their authority in competition with other *manti*, already go some way toward answering these questions, especially with respect to "what it is that is authorized," and "why *adat* is so frequently engaged." Another answer already proposed is the basic moral values upon which I have claimed that *adat* is based and this factor not only contributes to an answer to the question of "why *adat* is authoritative" but also to "what it authorizes," since authorization of these values is always to some extent an effect of — even though not always a motive for — the application of *adat*.[211] Yet another previously suggested answer is that the authority of the ancestors: the intimate association of the ancestors with *adat* — experienced, perhaps most acutely, by means of the "ancestral language" in which *adat* is predominantly expressed — contributes significantly to *adat*'s authority.

However, ancestral authority alone cannot, anymore than "the weight of tradition," or moral orientation, account for the Bentian's propensity to engage *adat*; not even the *manti*'s power interests, even though in my experience often forming decisive incentives in this respect, can explain all of the cases of application of *adat*. A great variety of motives are at play when *adat* is engaged. In order to suggest some such motives, and to convey some understanding of the complexity of motivational and social articulations which typically characterize even a single instance of *adat* application, I will proceed by presenting an example of *adat* use. Through this example, I intend to illuminate such aspects of the dynamics of *adat* which a functionalist or consensus oriented approach would be unlikely to expose. I have already provided one example which illustrates, in depth, the process of engaging *adat*: Udin's story, which comprises a number of different instances of *adat* negotation, plate exchange, as well as invocation of *adat* principles (e.g.

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[211] That an authorization of relation-affirming or social values is always to some extent the result of the application of *adat* is a consequence, among other things, of a never-failing outspoken acclamation of such values in the speeches (and most other talk) of the *manti* which accompany formal *adat* affairs, and of the *manti's* efforts to collectively work towards such outcomes of *adat* negotiations which accord with these values. Also, as we shall see later, there are aspects of *adat* such as ceremonial exchange which work in somewhat more oblique ways to extol and hence promote these values.

postmarital residence rules). This example answers many of the questions posed above, and it should be taken as a complement to the one presented next.

Like Udin's story, the present example, which features two of the three *manti* presented above, centers on a lawsuit (*perkara*). However, in contrast to Udin's case, this *perkara* concerned a minor and much less consequential offense — not amounting to as much in the way of preceding and ensuing developments outside the case — so it can be said to represent a minor affair. As such it is perhaps also somewhat more representative of the majority of lawsuit cases. Being "a case of water buffaloes" (*perkara kerewau*), it certainly dealt with a subject which is a popular one for *perkara*: water buffaloes are and have probably always been, besides a source of status and a major exchange object, a major source of conflict.[212] For all of these reasons they are a favorite subject of discussion among the *manti*. And with expanding government control of the Bentian area, and increasing outside and local resentment to the traditional and still predominant custom of allowing the animals to range free, the popularity of this subject has probably only increased.

A Case of Water Buffaloes

Seeming very upset — screaming and walking about at a fast pace — Ma Buno, a middle-aged *belian* who had married into Temiang some twenty years ago, came one late afternoon to Ma Bari's *lou* in order to demand compensation from some of his close affinal relatives and longtime fellow villagers whose water buffaloes had entered his swidden field and damaged some of his rice plants. A couple of days later a small-scaled *perkara* was arranged, one which gathered only the principal parties involved — all in all six people — and was over and done with in a couple of hours. Ma Bari, in his capacity as leading *manti* and (inofficial) *kepala adat* in the village, presided over the *perkara*, which was held after dinner in his house, but represented at the same time also one of the accused. The other accused were Ma Lutar, Ma Kerudot, and Ma Buren — all Ma Buno's wife Nen Kiding's first or second cousins — as well as Ma Lombang, Nen Kiding's mother's brother, who especially after Nen Kiding's mother's death claimed a *puun* relationship with Nen Kiding (and thus indirectly with Ma Buno) as he did with so many other people in the village (see Fig. 1 for an illustration of kinship relations except for Ma Buren and his family who have been excluded for reasons of space).

[212] Water buffaloes appear to be an important source of conflict (and a common subject of lawsuits) also elsewhere in Southeast Asia. See e.g. Bowen (1991: 148); M. Rosaldo (1980:186).

Most of the talking during the *perkara* was done by Ma Bari who spoke for much of the time about previous *perkara* that had addressed the same matter, making particular reference to the size of the fines paid then, and thus attempting to base his judgment on precedence. Ma Buno also described the damages done and tried to promote his case, arguing that, in the present situation, water buffaloes should be tied in accordance with government regulations and not be left to roam free as in the olden days. After about an hour's rather slow oration, Ma Bari hastily concluded the case and made the verdict. He himself had to pay two dozen plates, which reflected the fact that two of his water buffaloes had entered Ma Buno's field twice. Also, so had two of Ma Lutar's water buffaloes: therefore it was determined that he, too, should pay two dozen plates to Ma Buno. In Ma Kerudot's case, two animals had also entered Ma Buno's field, but only once; hence he had to pay one dozen plates. In Ma Buren's case, one water buffalo had entered Ma Buno's field once; consequently he had to pay six plates, as was Ma Lombang, although in Ma Lombang's case one water buffalo had in fact entered Ma Buno's field twice.

The verdict thus established a kind of general logic, but from the point of view of this logic, Ma Lombang paid too little, an inconsistency which was not officially addressed by Ma Bari (but which appeared to slightly disturb him upon my inquiry about it), and which probably reflected the fact that Ma Lombang was Ma Buno's classificatory father-in-law (*tupu*). For this reason it was somewhat improper for Ma Buno to demand compensation from Ma Lombang, who according to the cultural logic could be expected to become insulted as a result. Precisely in order to vindicate this, Ma Buno also had to pay three plates to Ma Lombang as an "excuse" (*pengampun pengade*) for fining him. Thus, in sum, Ma Buno received only three plates from Ma Lombang. In addition, Ma Buno also had to pay one plate to Ma Lutar and Ma Buren each, in recognition of the fact that sometime earlier one of Ma Buno's own water buffaloes had once entered their fields — without, however, having decimated their rice, hence the scanty compensation. This rather insignificant instance of buffalo encroachment would have probably remained unaddressed had Ma Buno not fined Ma Lutar and Ma Buren. Since he did, however, it would have been somewhat less than fair not to recognize it. Finally, Ma Buno also had to pay Ma Bari two plates as a reward for presiding over the *perkara*. This reward (*temai pengurus*) was simultaneously identified as serving the purpose of offsetting any spiritual (and perhaps social) tension arising from the lawsuit (*bemeng palin besarah besagi*). All plates were delivered on the spot, with small pieces of turmeric (*jomit*) placed on top of the piles, representing a gesture aimed to cool (*merengin*) the hot relationships between the people involved (turmeric is a basic ritual element used for "cooling purposes" in a variety of settings), but given also in order to be applied to the stalks of the rice plants of the affected swiddens, because otherwise, according to Ma Bari, rice would not grow in these fields.

On the other hand, no special consideration was given in the verdict to the fact that it was Ma Buren's big bull who had led the others into the field, as well as likely caused more damage than the others, and certainly most psychic distress, since this bull was known to be so malicious that Ma Buno said he had feared for the safety of his small grandchildren who together with their parents lived with him and his wife on his swidden. Some practical measures were taken to prevent continuing annoyance caused by this animal, however. Ma Lombang volunteered to tame it. For this purpose it would be tied for some time to a house post beneath Ma Bari's *lou*, while Ma Lombang would bring it salt, and make it inured to people, applying his expert knowledge on water buffaloes.

Of Plates and People

Perhaps most conspicuously, Ma Buno's *perkara* highlights the Bentian's practice of plate exchange. As observed above, plates change hands on a wide range of occasions which are considered to belong to the sphere of *adat* (in part precisely because of the plate exchange which to Bentians symbolize *adat*). In many cases, the value of the plates transacted is materially insignificant and clearly subordinate to the symbolic aspect of the transaction which is crucial in all cases. The practice evidently is not only about compensation in material terms but rather represents an instance of what can be called a symbolical economy. Whether it functions to compensate for services performed (e.g. curing, adjudication), injuries to person or property (e.g. to one's riceplants), or resources forfeited (e.g. children wedded) — it does so primarily psychologically, not economically. A good example here is the plates given to Udin, after his *perkara*, so as to make his "feelings good" (*aseng buen,* lit., gallbladder good) when having to stay in Temiang. Seldom does the value of the compensation really stand up to, in economical terms, the losses or expenditures that it purports to cover (which often are not really measurable). Even when it does, the compensation is inalienable in the sense that the plates cannot be sold — they can, in principle at least, only be used by being put into continuing circulation in the *adat* economy — and thus do not provide true compensation in the sense of enabling actual replacement of the losses.[213]

[213] There are some reservations which apply to this statement. Under certain circumstances, the plates can *indirectly* enable replacement of material losses or expenditures. In the first place, they can — within Bentian communities — be used as payment for goods or services which can alternatively be paid for with money (e.g. hunting dogs procured from co-villagers, or *belian* curing and other forms of *adat* assistance). In the second place, the plates substitute, as is well recognized, for other valuables such as gongs or jars which often represent the currency in which fines and other *adat* payments are nominally expressed ,particularly in the case of larger sums; if plates cannot be produced when *adat* payment is due, then such valuables (or at least money), which have a rather high monetary value on the external or regional market, have to be provided instead. As these examples indicate, being in

In Ma Buno's case, the compensation that he received — even though not that substantial — may in fact have corresponded unusually closely, in material terms, to the losses that it served to recompense. Nevertheless, it was not primarily the aspect of material compensation that motivated him. In the first place, the losses — which represented only a very small portion of his rice plants — were not so great that he would really have needed to seek compensation; his capacity to provide for his family had been impaired. Indeed, it somewhat puzzled me that Ma Buno did seek compensation in the first place. Why was he not satisfied with just reporting the matter to Ma Bari or some of the other owners of the water buffaloes involved? Why did he have to sue his relatives and bring the affair to court? This seemed to me somewhat inconsistent with general Bentian notions of how close kin should treat each other, as well as with the general cultural tendency to avoid direct social confrontation.[214] Clearly also, this indicated that something other than community harmony or the preservation of kin relations was at stake here: *adat* was engaged not primarily for relation-affirming purposes.

Why, then, was *adat* engaged in this case? What was Ma Buno's anger about and what motivated him to make such a large affair of what in fact most people would, as I was told, have been willing to overlook, or at least, have been content to respond to with less radical measures? The first thing to know when attempting to answer these questions is that Ma Buno had already once before had trouble with one of the water buffaloes now involved: a few months earlier Ma Buren's bull had attacked one of Ma Buno's water buffaloes, without, however, having caused any injury to the latter. Clearly, Ma Buren's bull played a central role also in the present case. It was above all this animal which irritated Ma Buno and particularly this one which he claimed was a threat to his grandchildren. Ma Buren's bull was, in fact, a problem also for other villagers, especially those who resided in the village proper where it had for some time been rambling about after dusk, destroying plants, enclosures and disturbing people's sleep (I myself, for example, along with the other people dwelling in Ma Bari's *lou*, woke up several nights when the animal foraged in the garbage beneath the building, occasionally thrusting its horns against the houseposts). Considering that Ma Buren had been indolent or at least ineffective in his efforts to control the animal's movements, taking the affair to court may

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possession of a large amount of plates can affect the size of one's other economic resources. The *adat* economy thus does not constitute an entirely insulated, but rather a semi-autonomous realm.

[214] In a very similar case among the Ilongots, making such charges were notably also seen as incongruent with expectations about proper behavior between kin (see M. Rosaldo 1980:186). Among both Ilongots and Bentians, sueing someone is seen to amount, in Rosaldo's (1980:190) terms, to taking positions on "opposing sides," or in Bentian terminology, to dividing into different "parties" (pihak, imang), thus publicly exhibiting division in an explicit and public manner inconsistent with the notions of unity by which relatives are ideally characterized. However, it also permits, as Rosaldo (1980:191) has remarked, "interested adults to make political use of feelings that ordinary dealings [in societies strongly characterized by an ideal of non-confrontation and significant material interpersonal interdependence] encourage them to set aside."

in fact have represented for Ma Buno a more or less necessary measure in order to make an end to the trouble caused by this animal, and I know that Ma Bari, at least, was motivated by the possibility of such an outcome of the *perkara* when agreeing to hold it.

Other motives were probably more compelling for Ma Buno, however, as indicated by the fact that he had insisted on a *perkara* even the first time he was troubled by Ma Buren's bull, when the latter had yet to become a more general problem in the village. Then also Ma Buno had appeared at Ma Bari's *lou* noisily expressing his anger (even though Ma Buren did not stay there). Then, however, Ma Bari had managed to calm down Ma Buno by having Ma Buren catch the animal. Also, the fact that Ma Buno had sued not only Ma Buren but also other relatives whose water buffaloes had entered his rice fields indicates that there was something else motivating him in this respect. Given that their animals had not previously caused Ma Buno any trouble — or anyone else, for that matter — and that they, in addition, were regarded to have only followed Ma Buno's bull, these people had not exhibited a similar degree of indolence as Ma Buren, and could not fairly be said to deserve getting fined. In this connection it should be noted that the traditional practice to have the water buffaloes roam free was still the dominant one in the village. Unlike among, for example, the Gayo of northern Sumatra, there is no maxim stating that: "[b]uffalo are kept in corrals, rice fields are penned in" (Bowen 1991:148). Instead, neither buffaloes nor rice fields are typically enclosed, a situation inevitably entailing some accidents on occasion, and necessitating some degree of forbearance, especially between kin.

As I saw it at the time, Ma Buno's insistence to take the affair to court, as well as his anger — which was probably what prompted this insistence, rather than any rationally conceived arguments — most immediately reflected the facts that he was particularly sensitive to offenses, and had some particular reasons to be touchy about water buffaloes. Thus, his reaction reflected his personal history, particularly the fact that he was a rather ambitious man who sought influence through a variety of channels — he was a popular and fairly traditionalistic *belian* while at the same time active in the national Civil Defence Corps (HANSIP) and in the implementation of several government development programs — in combination with sometimes being left out of the management of important collective matters and not always getting his fair share of common or exchanged goods and resources (a result, in part, of his non-local origins, and his tendency to reside on his swidden field, outside the village nucleus). These circumstances made him, along with the rest of his family, harbor quite strong attitudes of distrust and envy towards other villagers, and predisposed him to react strongly to slights and wrongs. They also made him disinclined to let the affair be settled without taking it to *perkara* — as they made him feel that doing so would imply that people could offend him and get away with it.

Ma Buno's participation in government-organized activities, on the other hand (which may in part have been prompted precisely by his experiences of being disadvantaged), predisposed him to react strongly to concerns relating to water buffaloes, which were an important target of local government politics at the time. Probably because of how his sense of self-worth and his perceived possibilities of wielding influence in his community were bound up with his role in such activities, rather than because of a commitment to government politics *per se*, Ma Buno was keen to invoke selected aspects of government rhetorics and ideology, and recently he had even begun to observe the directive that water buffaloes should be tied or corralled, despite the inconvenience that this meant for him, considering that he owned three of these animals himself. Against this background, the damages and distress caused him by his relatives' water buffaloes became particularly hard for him to bear, representing not only encroachments on his rice field but insults to his person, reminders of the indifference of others to the goals to which he had committed himself.

What was most primarily at stake for Ma Buno, then, in taking the affair to court, was not community interests, but his personal honor or integrity, and perhaps to some degree, his grandchildren's safety. Indeed, in my interpretation, his demands for compensation most primarily represented an attempt at obtaining symbolical redress of what could be described as "offended *amour propre*," a state which Just (2001:116) has identified as a principal motive for litigation among the Dou Donggo, and which also represents an important incentive for engaging *adat* among the Bentian, albeit *nare aseng*, "hurt gallbladder," rather than "love for the self," represents the Bentian expression. The Bentian, in fact, often engage it for other purposes — and sometimes with quite other effects — than relation-affirming ones. I would not go as far here as Just, who contends that "public admission of the moral asymmetry of the disputants ... is the real currency of the Dou Donggo moral economy" (2001:116). Like him, however, I do think that lawsuits — and plate exchange — play an important role in expressing and shaping the moral standing of people, and that they derive much of their sanctioning power precisely from this function (cf. Just 2001:127). Thus, there is another side to *adat*, one which may in fact be as integral to it as the one that has mainly been considered so far. Even though basically, and in many instances very conspicuously, serving (and functioning) to promote social integration and unification — through explicit celebration of such values by the *manti* in their speeches, for instance, or by various ritual usages such as the use of turmeric in Ma Buno's *perkara* which convey the same message — the application of *adat* also inevitably functions, and sometimes consciously serves, to promote social differentiation — and social dissension. The traffic in plates makes asymmetry visible by establishing who are the haves and the have-nots, the generous and the not-so-generous, and the worthy and the unworthy. Because of its recurrent enactment and salience in everyday life, this traffic also makes giving and receiving, and not-giving and not-

receiving, pressing and ever-present concerns. Besides regulating socially disruptive sentiments, the system of plate exchange functions, on account of spotlighting concerns of reciprocity, to nurture such sentiments.

Because of its economic aspect, *adat* also enables, somewhat like ritualization, a possibility to act in contravention of *adat* — and get away with it. If the required payments are made, then what has been done can often be made undone, and improper conditions made legitimate. As the example of Kiai indicates, you can sometimes — or at least the *manti* of the past could — behave almost as you please — immorally, and in blatant breach of proper *adat* — as long as you are able to buy yourself out. *Adat*, then, not only embodies such principles as maintenance of relations, community harmony, and respect for kin, but also those such as the "right of the mightiest." The ones who have had most to win from the institution of *adat* in society are, of course, the *manti*. *Adat* represents the foundation of *manti* authority in society, providing them with their occupation as well as their legitimacy to act as leaders. The fact that the *manti*, in accordance with special *adat* regulations, used to have — and to some extent still have — to pay higher fines than other people is not at variance with this proposition, but rather represents another kind of support for the principle that *adat* operates to set the *manti* apart from the rest of the society. Formerly, *adat* also served to set another category of people apart by stipulating the conditions whereby one would obtain slave status — the principal one being the inability to pay *adat* fines and other debts. To the extent that the Bentian ever lived in a class society, it is obvious that *adat* contributed significantly. The differentiating aspect of *adat* may perhaps not seem that pronounced among the Bentian, having always been to some degree counterbalanced — and concealed — by its communalistic and harmonizing aspects, which provide the official guise of *adat*, at least today. Observing other, more hierarchic societies, however, it becomes evident that "the other side" of *adat* by no means has to be as suppressed as it is among the Bentian. In the sultanates, for sure, *adat* was always something altogether different in this respect. Assuming that *adat* was first intentionally practiced by them, and only later taken over by the peoples of the interior, we may infer that this aspect of *adat* has been crucial to it from the very beginning.[215]

Even though no doubt functioning to lessen its impact, the suppression of "the other side of *adat*" among the Bentian has, we may observe, the effect of allowing divisive, competitive and other individualistic or narrow kin interests to be expressed in what is

[215] Atkinson (1989:267) takes the fact that past Wana *adat* leaders (*basal*, and their descendants) had to pay higher *adat* payments than other Wana as a kind of evidence (in addition to Wana claims to this end) "that the code originated under the hierarchical conditions imposed by the sultanates." For the Bentian, additional support for a hypothesis on the introduction of *adat* from the sultanates is provided by the origin story of *adat* (see Hopes 1997a:110), in which the *seniang besarah*, from whom mankind learned *adat*, teach the use in certain contexts of *adat* of red and yellow rice — given also by the Sultan of Kutai to tribute-paying leaders.

perceived as a relation-affirming idiom, and in a way which is in fact often less confronting, and at least more indirect, than dealing with some matter outside *adat* (here again, it is pertinent to make reference to such matters as the use of turmeric in Ma Buno's *perkara,* which have the effect of foregrounding the relation-affirming aspects of taking an affair to court). For Ma Buno, going to court was also in several respects preferable to addressing the accused directly; had he done so he would presumably have been dangerously agitated, in the case of Ma Buren whose bull was the principal object of his anger, or more or less ashamed, in the case of the other accused (notably, a markedly shameful or apologizing deportment also characterized Ma Buno throughout the *perkara*, see Plate 7). To Bentians, *adat* negotiation essentially represents a form of knowledgeable deployment of speech and reason by those rehearsed in *adat*, and as such, an inherently non-violent, controlled, and relation-improving ("cooling," in the local terminology) procedure for dealing with things. Indeed, as elsewhere in Southeast Asia, the existence of *adat* is commonly legitimized by the proposition that without (or before) *adat*, a state of social disorder and unchecked violence would prevail (cf. Atkinson 1989:268; Schlegel 1970:127,134). Thus, in indigenous conceptions, *adat* is closely associated with order and control. As such, it is also closely associated with leadership. The close association of *adat* with leadership is made clear, for instance, in the origin story of *adat* in which the mythological hero Kilip pleads for the heavenly *seniang besarah* to teach humankind *adat* and in this connection declares: "The villages have no mantiq [*manti*], leaders. Each house is without a family head, so that all live in constant disturbance and without peace" (Hopes 1997a:108), thereby suggesting that this state, in itself, is tantamount to disorder, and, conversely, that leadership is essential to *adat* (and perhaps, that there was no leadership before *adat*).[216] Recounting how Kilip goes to learn *adat* from various spirit teachers from whom he only obtains bits and pieces but no coherent, overall understanding of the meaning and purpose of *adat* before he meets the *seniang besarah* (the "*seniang* of negotiation") who are presented as the true guardians of *adat*, the origin story of *adat* also allegorically expresses the often invoked principle that *adat* can only be legitimately learned from its rightful owners, and after requisite *adat* payments have been made, thus serving to maintain the power of those who already have it.

As Bentians see it, then, *adat* represents the proper way of resolving conflicts. Indeed, there exists a notion that a problem is not really solved if it has not been subjected to *adat* negotiation. Even though this ideal is frequently disregarded in practice — leaving problems to "eventuate" or "transpire" representing a common strategy of problem

[216] Notably, I could not among the Bentian obtain an informant able to recount the origin story of *adat* for a recording, suggesting that *adat* objectification, along with *manti* power and regional integration, is and was more developed among the Benuaq than among the Bentian.

management (see Chapter 3) — it is nevertheless sincerely regarded by most as an ideal in principle, and failure to comply with it is often experienced as unsatisfactory and disturbing, not the least because of the everpresent threat of supernatural sanctions ensuing from *tapen,* the breach of social norms. To some extent, adherence to this ideal probably represented a concern also in the present case, at least for Ma Bari, who was a man particularly concerned with good form and the observance of *adat*, and who, when consenting to hold the *perkara*, probably did so in part because of experiencing Ma Buno's behavior and that of Ma Buren's bull as adding up to a sufficient enough violation of *adat* so as to require a counterbalancing response in the form of formal *adat* negotiation.

That the ideal of engaging *adat* would appeal to the *manti* is perhaps not surprising, but that it would also be more widely and, on the whole, rather sincerely shared requires explanation, and begs the question of what is it about *adat* or its place in society that generates this ideal. To some degree, this question may be answered by reference to the fact that the Bentian, for some reason which is not entirely clear — perhaps it could have something to do with the relatively strong centrifugal forces operating in their society — are remarkably form- and formalization-minded, that is, unusually strongly inclined (e.g. in comparison with their neighbors) to ritualized patterns of action and interaction, as well as characterized by a very general and fundamental concern with good form. To the extent that an explanation along these lines is valid, then the fact that *adat* represents good form can indeed explain a good deal of its appeal, which thus needs not be only a function of its instrumental value, but may to as high a degree reflect its expressive merits. Such an explanation does not yet account for why *adat* represents good form in the first place — a condition which can, however, be accounted for by such factors as the recurrent exaltation of *adat* by the *manti*, the resonance of *adat* with deeply held social values, and its celebrated association with the ancestors. However, it seems to me that certain qualities of *adat*'s form may themselves significantly contribute to the experience of *adat* as good form — as well as to its appeal more generally.

In the first place, the fact that *adat* typically is highly formalized — indeed, particularly formalized even in the context of Bentian society — is clearly important in this respect. Against the background of the Bentian's general preoccupation with form and formalization, this aspect of *adat*'s form would seem to make it only logical for them to be attracted to *adat* and inclined to regard it as good form. More specifically, the almost unexceptional association of formalization with the application of *adat* also works to authorize the latter in the same ways in which it works to authorize ritualization. For example, *adat* discourse is highly structured, so contestation of it is made difficult and a perception of it as following a cultural script is encouraged, thus authorizing it by way of "entextualization."

Besides formalization, another prominent and, from the point of view of our present problem, very important attribute of *adat*'s form is that it is conspicuously "roundabout" (*mengkelotes*). Not only is ancestral language — the principal medium of *adat* — characterized by this feature, but so are, to a lesser or higher degree, most instances of self-conscious enactment of *adat*, verbal and other. In fact, among the Bentian (as apparently among the Tiruray, see Schlegel 1970:43), doing things "the *adat* way" essentially means doing them in a roundabout or circuitous way, for example, killing a water buffalo according to a complex ceremony and prolonging its expiration by delivering a multitude of non-fatal stabs. The almost obligatory practice of serving food, or minimally betel and cigarettes, prior to conducting important *adat* business (exemplified in the story of Sentoa) further illustrates this aspect of *adat*'s form. Besides being regarded as *adat* — and ritualized in its own right (e.g. through special bodily gestures) — this custom has the function of "framing" the subsequent proceedings as something important, as *adat*, and of creating the impression that *adat* is so important so as to be properly approached only indirectly. A similar, more or less pronounced, framing and authorizing effect also results at other times when an *adat*-abiding action assumes a saliently indirect, elaborate or otherwise articulate form, as in the example of water-buffalo killing. Indeed, this is a common — almost inherent — property of action of this sort, and as such it is not restricted to the narrowly conceived sphere of *adat*, but is also a potential quality of similarly shaped action outside it, such as the framed performances of directives investigated earlier in this chapter.

Indirectness in a stricter sense of the term is also a feature of *adat*'s form. *Adat* discourse often only indirectly, by way of metaphor and allusion, represents the social conditions which it describes and responds to. Also, conflict resolution and other *adat* proceedings are typically carried out by the indirect, nonconfrontational method of mediation (e.g. see Rosaldo 1974 for similar observations in another Southeast Asian context). In these ways indirectness works to promote the perception of *adat* as good form. Because unveiled confrontation and uncontrolled emotional outbreaks are regarded as vices with potentially dangerous supernatural consequences, this feature of *adat*'s form speaks directly to some basic Bentian values. Indeed, it seems to me that the indirectness of *adat*, as well as its roundaboutness, may to an important degree represent control: both features have the effect of creating the impression that the process of *adat* application is conducted in a composed and deliberate manner. In addition, both these features have another advantageous effect in making discourse and action with which they are associated appear "refined" (*halus,* I.), thus functioning, in this respect as well, to set *adat* off from other discourse and action as positively different.

A final prominent characteristic of *adat*'s form is its aspect as economy, that is, the tendency of *adat* application to take the form of, or at least be associated with, ceremonial exchange. As already observed, the practice of *adat* frequently involves plate exchange,

to such an extent that the white plates have become symbolic of *adat*. Indeed, so commonly is such exchange associated with *adat* negotiations and other important social procedures, that it is quite justified to claim that what engaging *adat* essentially "is about" is translating a social problem or other social condition into an "economic affair" (as I argued is the case with ritualization — with the exception that this process primarily translates the conditions to which it responds into a matter of spirit-human rather than social exchange). It appears also as if ceremonial exchange, more than embellishing *adat*, is essential to it in the sense that the procedures to which such exchange is attached would not be perceived as fully proper and authoritative (ratified, so to speak) unless they are at least concluded by it. In fact, in indigenous conceptions, plates are seen as the substance (*isi*) of *adat* procedures rather than as an aspect of their form.

My intention here is not so much to stress the association of ceremonial exchange with the practice of *adat*, however, as to try to uncover the underlying rationale of this association, and so obtain some insights into how this feature of *adat*'s form contributes to *adat*'s appeal — and authority. As with formalization, roundaboutness, and indirectness, there are certain qualities of ceremonial exchange which make its association with *adat* seem essential. One category of such qualities specifically reflects the use of material objects in ceremonial exchange and has in fact already been discussed indirectly in connection with the analysis of Kaharingan rituals in Chapter 4. I am referring here to those properties of material objects identified as having the effect of making ritualization authoritative. Many of these properties function to make ceremonial exchange indispensable in *adat* procedures for roughly the same reasons that rituals are regarded by Bentians as hopelessly incomplete and ineffective without an appropriate and sufficient material setup (i.e. of offerings and other paraphernalia). In brief, ceremonial exchange is imperative because objects are performatively essential, and ceremonial exchange, and *adat*, derive much of their authority from what objects "do," in illocutionary terms, and from the fact that the latter have — as Mauss already realized some eighty years ago — a special capacity to index social relationships (see Mauss 1990).

Ceremonial exchange essentially serves to communicate something about social relationships, suggesting that its significance cannot be reduced simply to a function of the properties of the objects used. There is also something about the actual *practice* of exchanging plates that contributes to its importance and thus to that of *adat*. What this is seems to me to be nicely summed up in a comment by Webb Keane on Sumbanese marriage exchanges, which he interprets as representing "a vigorous working through of the implications that people are, or should be, embedded in social relations with others (both living and dead) and ... that these relations are inseparable from their material entailments" (2002:71). In other words, I suggest that ceremonial exchange is consonant with a couple of very basic Bentian values and life experiences, namely, that of affirming

one's relations and that of sharing one's material resources, and it is in large part because of being expressive of these fundamental aspects of Bentian ideology and ontology that the practice — and by extension, *adat* in general — is experienced as proper and hence compelling.[217] It seems to me that Bentian plate exchange, by virtue of its form, communicates — at least as much as the Balinese cockfight (Geertz 1972) — something fundamental to its practitioners about themselves, and that this communication — which in Rousseau's, (1998:118) terms is tacit rather than didactic — affects them at least as much as any explicit exposition of the same messages in discourse. At any rate, this aspect of *adat*'s form testifies in yet another, subtle way to the thoroughly value-rational character of *adat*, which is perhaps what most basically makes *adat* appear as "the appropriate thing to do."

The reason that *adat* is seen as imperative and authoritative by Bentians, then, has a lot to do with the expressive qualities of its form. Its engagement invokes "the world according to the Bentian" or at least, their idealized visions of it. Their inclination to frequently call upon *adat* indirectly also reflects the importance of its expressive qualities due to their preoccupation with good form. To a greater extent, however, this inclination probably reflects *adat*'s versatile ability to respond authoritatively to a wide range of indexical or practical concerns, in particular, its capacity to authorize various social conditions, including both conditions which accord with the celebrated collectivist and relation-affirming ideals of the society and those which do not, but rather, reflect differentiating or divisive aspirations. In relative contrast to ritualization whose importance is predominantly illocutionary, the importance of engaging *adat* is as much perlocutionary as illocutionary, as the case of Ma Buno's *perkara* demonstrates: while the official outcome of the *perkara* responded only to Ma Buno's symbolic concerns, unofficially it also fulfilled Ma Bari's more practical objectives of having Ma Buren's unruly bull tied up, and the social disturbance associated with Ma Buno's discontentment quelled. Such practical, causal-instrumental consequences of *adat* application are no less essential to the institution than the values that it enshrines; indeed, even more primary than promoting any particular values, *adat* can be said to promote sociality, practical co-existence. Notwithstanding the remarkably strong "*adat* orientation" observed to prevail among the Bentian, they are, as we know, a remarkably practical people in some respects, and there are sometimes practical priorites which outweigh the imperatives of *adat*. Keane (2002:71) proposes that marriage exchanges, because of the values that they

[217] Additional reasons why ceremonial exchange is compelling are the notions of supernatural retribution and remuneration sanctioning it. As noted in Chapter 4 there exists certain notions according to which participation in social interaction is in itself conducive to obtaining a stronger soul (especially when such interaction involves the transfer of some form of resources or services), while conversely, failure to participate in interaction may count as *tapen,* i.e. a "breach of norms of sociality" subjecting the persons concerned to soul weakness or loss.

embody, represent to the Sumbanese "the distinctiveness of human self-worth," a comment which, I think, rings no less true in the Bentian context. However, even though *adat* generally is highly imperative to the Bentian, it is not that imperative that it cannot be done without at times — indeed, even marriage ceremonies may, as we have seen, sometimes be omitted. This does not mean, of course, that the Bentian look at themselves as somewhat less than human, even though they do often see themselves as somewhat less ordered than others. It shows, however, that there are limits even to the authority of *adat*, and that the notions of good form with which it is associated are ultimately not as important to the Bentian as the concrete social existence that *adat* most basically functions to regulate.

The Impact of the Government

The reader should now be in a better position with respect to understanding why *adat* is authoritative, what it authorizes, and why it is, after all, relatively frequently engaged. Leadership ambitions, injured *amour propre*, the ideals of non-confrontation, relation affirmation and resource circulation, as well as certain formal features of the application of *adat*, along with its recurrent celebration by the *manti* and others, and the fact that its practice itself generates "socially disruptive sentiments," are principal factors which all in multiple ways illuminate one or several of these questions. In addition, there is one more factor which is extremely important. I am referring to government influence, which will be the subject of the rest of this chapter, first, in terms of the impact that it has had on the Bentian's relationship to *adat*, and then, in its capacity as an authority in its own right and as a source of authority in Bentian society.

The Impact of Government Influence on Adat

In discussions of *adat* in recent studies of Indonesian societies, the term is most popularly talked about in the sense of tradition, especially in the sense of government-sanctioned tradition (e.g. see Acciaioli 1985; Bowen 1991; Kipp and Rodgers 1987; Pemberton 1994; Spyer 1996; Volkman 1990). As such it is often associated with a depoliticized, standardized ethnicity or regional identity
promoted by the state, and it is considered to have been to some degree reconstructed or constructed in response to state expectations, in the process having become objectified, performance-oriented, and reduced in scope. Here I will not discuss at any greater length this notion of *adat,* as it has already been described so extensively elsewhere, but also since it has not, it seems to me, gained quite the same significance among the Bentian as

it appears to have done in many other parts of Indonesia. On account of their remote location, the Bentian are rarely called upon to stage "cultural performances" in government administrative centers, and they are not included among those selected upriver groups who regularly carry out cultural performances during the *Erau* festival in Tenggarong. Historically, until today, they have also rather rarely been visited by government officials, so consequently the institution of welcoming dances is poorly developed among them, in contrast to some of their neighbors.[218] Nevertheless, most people have heard about other groups' cultural performances or witnessed them on television, and they have to a certain extent internalized the expectations for minority groups to develop an objectified, narrowly cultural tradition, which has resulted in them sometimes feeling inferior *vis-à-vis* those whom they consider to have a more "developed" or aesthetically refined tradition. All the same, no significant revision or invention of tradition seems so far to have occurred among the Bentian (cf. Hobsbawm 1983), and it cannot be said that tradition has become very objectified yet.[219]

All this does not mean that the present national or the previous colonial and precolonial governments have had little impact on *adat* among the Bentian. On the contrary, they have had an enormous impact on *adat* — in the sense of customary law. *Adat* in this sense is, as said, presumably exogenous in origin and has to a significant degree developed in response to government expectations, and government-endorsed local aspirations for leadership and integration. Most certainly it has also become significantly more objectified in response to government expectations of order. To both the sultanate of Kutai, which recognized *adat yang teradat* as a system of governance valid in the Dayak areas outside the sultanate proper (see Widjono 1991), and the Dutch who, spearheaded by the so called Leiden School, attempted to codify the *adatrecht* of the different Indonesian peoples (and protect it from Islamic influence where possible), *adat* represented a vehicle by which order was to be established in the communities in which it still held sway — and until independence, government influence therefore generally aimed and functioned to strengthen rather than weaken the institution — notwithstanding that certain colonial demands and dictates weakened or obliterated many *particular* aspects of *adat* in the sense of tradition.

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[218] In the last few years, however, since the establishment of the transmigration site in the midst of the Bentian area in 1995, a number of Bentian *belians* have occasionally been invited to this site to perform cultural performances in the form of abridged *belian* rituals in connection with the celebration of Independence Day (or other festivities).

[219] The tradition of planting rice in the *mementian* fashion has become something of an ethnic marker for the Bentian. However, the custom is not performed for outsiders and it has not become objectified or aesthetically refined in response to the expectations for minority groups to have a distinctive tradition. Even though it may be performed today with these expectations born in mind, it is enacted for altogether different reasons and has developed and probably also spread entirely independently of them.

After independence, on the other hand, this can perhaps no longer be said to be true. In the postcolonial period, and especially during Suharto's New Order regime, a rather totalitarian imposition of a standardized national order (belying the national slogan of "Unity in Diversity"), and its extension, in the name of development, also to the nation's so called "*adat* societies" (*masyarakat adat*) — despite a *de facto* recognition in the constitution and a number of other government laws of a conditional legitimacy of *adat* law in such societies[220] — has meant that the institution inevitably has lost some of its practical significance — among the Bentian, as elsewhere in Indonesia. Notwithstanding the continuing acknowledgement in Kalimantan of the institution of *kepala adat*, the government prescribed system of village administration (*aparat desa*) holding ultimate official political authority and the three-partite subdistrict leadership of army, police, and administrative government personnel, has been implemented here as well, with the consequence that the function of *adat* has tended to become reduced to consultation and the management of internal social affairs (see Martinus Nanang 1998).

However, even though the *aparat desa* has gained some ground at the expense of *adat* institutions, and various customs and aspects of village organization have been altered to conform to government expectations, Bentian *kepala adat* and other *manti* do still hold much unofficial authority, and deal with a majority of social and political matters in their communities in accordance with *adat* and without intervention of the government or even the *aparat desa*, at least in those communities located at a distance from the subdistrict capitals. Ordinary people also often invoke *adat* principles as guides for behavior (even though it is not rare for them to invoke government regulations as well). Consequently, *adat* among the Bentian is still predominantly a question of customary law rather than one of distinctive tradition,[221] and as such it continues — somewhat like Carol Warren (1993) argues that *adat* institutions do, under an overlay of

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[220] Except in the constitution (article 18), *adat* is given recognition also in the Basic Agrarian Law of 1960 (article 2), the Village Government Law of 1979 (article 2), and in the Interior Minister's Regulations no. 11 of 1984 and the Interior Minister's Instruction no. 17 of 1989. A new law of 1999 (no. 41) also explicitly recognizes *adat*. Basically, these sources state that *adat* should be recognized in so far that it does still apply and that it does not contradict national interests. See e.g. Martinus Nanang 1998; Sellato 2001:112; Warren 1993.

[221] An example suggesting to what extent, at its extreme, *adat* among the Bentian can be a question of customary law rather than of distinctive tradition (*tradisi*) was provided to me by Ma Kesaling, an outspoken minor *manti* who was assertively active, like a number of others, in "defending the society" (*mempertahankan masyarakat*, I.). Disappointed, presumably, by my expressed intent not to primarily investigate or get politically involved in "the issue of the companies" (*masalah perusahan*), but in religion (Kaharingan) and culture (*kebudayaan*), he, the first time I met him, reminded me to never lose sight of *adat* while pursuing these lines of research. By *"adat"* he then and generally meant, it soon became clear to me on this and a number of later occasions, primarily the rules regulating forest resource use, or as he expressed it, the forest itself. As he also noted, the forest was "the basis of *adat*" (*dasar adat*, I.), indeed of the entire existence of the Bentian.

goverment institutions, in Bali — to hold considerable practical power.[222] Against this background, the observation of Patricia Spyer (1996:28) and others (see e.g. Bowen 1991:149) that *adat* in postcolonial Indonesia "has become increasingly bereft of power as it is redefined to codify highly limited aspects of 'traditional' sociocultural life" does not seem entirely valid for the Bentian. In the first place, such a redefinition of *adat* has not occurred to a very significant degree among them, and in the second place, it is doubtful to what extent *adat* among the Bentian really can be said to have suffered from an *increasing* loss of power, especially if we look at the developments during the past two decades.

In the 1980s and 1990s, *adat* among the Bentian, and in interior Kalimantan more generally, can in fact be said to have become more, rather than less, important, both in the sense of being powerful and pressing. This development is due principally to two factors: the concessions by the government to timber and mining companies, and so called "Industrial Forest Plantations" (*HTI*) as well as transmigration projects of forested land in present or past use by the local peoples, and the increasing importance and legitimacy of a discourse on indigenous or *adat* peoples' rights, most enthusiastically circulated by national and international NGOs, but also increasingly taken into consideration by government agencies. In the Bentian's case, the threat — occasioned by their remote and dispersed residence and their general reputation as primitive and backward (*terbelakang*, I.) — of forced resettlement or other extensive government interference in local affairs having the effect of reducing autonomy, can also be mentioned as an important factor here, as can timber company-provided village development projects (*bina desa*) aimed at introducing — often with little consideration of indigenous preferences — new forms of commercial agriculture and animal husbandry in place of traditional ones. However, the single most influential factor among the Bentian in this respect is probably the ruthless appropriation and subsequent clear-cutting by timber and forest plantation companies of thousands of hectares of their lands planted with rattan (and other crops such as fruit trees), and their extensively NGO supported attempts at resisting or revoking this appropriation, and demanding compensation (*ganti rugi*) for the losses (see Fried 1995 for an extended discussion of these events).

In the Bentian's efforts to maintain control over their land resources (focused on petitions to various government agencies), but also in local discourse concerned with these assets or the possibility of maintaining some degree of political autonomy *vis-à-vis* the government (and its local collaborators, the companies), *adat* has in the past two decades served as a key concept whose validity has to an important extent been expedited

[222] As indications of this continuing practical power of *adat* among the Bentian we may mention, for example, their propensity to subject social conflicts to *adat* negotiation, and the extent to which what I have called a moral economy still operates among them.

by the limited official legitimacy — however small, technically — that *adat* has had through acknowledgement in laws and the institution of *kepala adat* in Kalimantan. Indeed, all along, even during the most oppressive phases of the New Order era, *adat* has provided, at least to some extent, a legitimate forum for the negotiation of indigenous as opposed to government issues — as well as a facade behind which it has been possible to vent what would strictly speaking be government issues. But in the 1980s and 1990s, the legitimacy of *adat* did grow additionally, in part because of NGO-led promotion of minority peoples rights and increasingly open discussion of these in the press, but also because of a more sympathetic government stance toward *adat* (or at least, a growing concern with it), expressed, among other things, by increasingly popular government "seminars on *adat*" (*seminar adat)*, where, in at least one, an educated Bentian author presented a paper serving to defend Bentian land rights (see Fried 1995:140-45; Titus Pantir 1990; also Sellato 1991:82).[223] In the period of burgeoning democracy toward the end of the New Order, and especially after Suharto's fall in 1998, the situation has — as newspaper sources clearly bear out — still further changed to *adat*'s advantage. In a new law of 1999 (no. 41) it is explicitly stated that communities qualifying as *masyarakat adat* (*adat* societies) can claim tenure rights to forested village lands, although the government still retains ultimate ownership of all forested land (see Sellato 2001:112).

Because of the above-mentioned developments then, *adat* among the Bentian has become imbued with a new urgency, and consequently it is probably more talked about now than ever. Indeed, to a significant degree the Bentian's present-day propensity to engage *adat* — whether for the sake of negotiation with outside agents or for internal concerns — reflects these developments. In other words, *adat*'s importance today — and presumably to some extent its authority as well — is by no means only a function of the resilience of the indigenous institutions and value system, but to a significant degree, a condition generated by external influence. Perhaps most importantly, by threatening to reduce local political autonomy and control over material resources, the government and other outside agents such as the companies have set in motion a development whereby the concept of *adat* has become unprecedently politicized (even while a certain depoliticization of the *institution* of *adat* has simultaneously occurred as a result of the development of local government institutions at the village and subdistrict levels). The Bentian's invocation of *adat* rights, together with the representation of their rotational system of rice and rattan cultivation as ecologically sustainable and market-oriented

[223] As Bernard Sellato (1991) has remarked, government seminars or symposiums (held at every administrative level) on various social and cultural questions became in this period a remarkably popular element of Indonesian political culture. As he observes (1991:77), a principal objective of arranging these seminars was, no doubt, to promote local support for national policies and "an official discourse" on the issues discussed (as well as to develop the tourist potential of local cultures). But as he also notes (1991:78), through these seminars "an evolution of the official attitudes towards traditional land rights can be felt."

(promoted by both themselves and local and international scholars, e.g. Budiono 1993; Fried 2000; Mulya 1993; Weinstock 1983b) has also proven an ultimately rather successful strategy, in that they have received the International Goldman Environmental Award and other forms of economic assistance from non-governmental national funds, as well as won some trials against the companies and had some of their appeals to the government affirmed. Consequently, there is, I think, presently little reason to surmise a very sudden demise of *adat* among the Bentian.

In addition to posing threats to the political autonomy and material resources of the Bentian, another way in which government influence, past and present, significantly has contributed to *adat*'s present-day importance is by way of making legality an all-important concern in their lives. As a side-effect of the growing importance of government law, the status of *adat* as law — and, more specifically, its status as the local counterpart of national law — has become increasingly important to its validity, and what little actual legal legitimacy that it has enjoyed in national law has played an important role in this respect as well. At least in the outspoken arguments that constitute their defense of *adat*, the legitimacy of *adat* among the Bentian derives to an important extent from its perceived legality, that is, from the fact that it holds the status as Law among them. But also in their *perceptions* more generally, it is, I would argue, this fact as much as *adat*'s correspondence to traditional practice or any values which gives *adat* its legitimacy to them. In that respect, political authority, and government authority even more than *adat* authority, among the Bentian can indeed be said to be legal-rational. Also, positions recognized by the government are often seen as more valid than others.

One more, superficially paradoxical, consequence of external influence on Bentian *adat* which should finally be noted is that its association with indigenous tradition has become increasingly entrenched. Even though it probably originated and has to an important extent developed in response to government expectations and other influences, *adat* among the Bentian has for a long time — if not necessarily from the very beginning — been intimately and eminently associated with the ancestors and local ways.[224] It seems that what Spyer (1996:28) calls "the inherently cosmopolitan character of its origin" has not manifestly affected *adat*'s conceptualization among the Bentian. Unlike the Wana, they do not regard *adat* as a historical importation from their former sultanate sovereigns (see Atkinson 1989:267), and they are not like some of Tsing's informants (see Tsing 1993:29-31) concerned with attributing it — for the purpose of authorization — to an exogenous source (e.g. the famous fourteenth-century Javanese kingdom of Majapahit, "post-Majapahit Banjar kingdoms," or the national government). Instead,

[224] This is not to say that *adat* among the Bentian has long been associated with a self-consciously perceived *ethnic* identity. Such a category developed, as I argued in Chapter 2, only recently, and *adat* has so far only rarely been discussed in strictly ethnic terms.

Bentians typically, as is probably the norm in Indonesia, contrast *adat* with the government — or exogenous authority more generally — and they often go to great lengths in emphasizing *adat*'s indigenous origin — commonly going back to the very earliest mythological heroes, who are believed to be still living, invisibly, in the ancestral homeland at the center of the Luangan area. Even though the *manti*, and to a lesser degree, other Bentians, critically depend and typically eclectically draw on both, in the general Bentian scheme of things, *adat* and the government (the latter typically referred to as *pemerintah*, "the government," for short, regardless of whether referring to past or present governments) represent two antithetical authorities, associated, respectively, with two contrary sets of values (the one socio-centric, the other ego-centric), life courses (tradition and modernity), modes of economy (a "moral" and a capitalistic), and geo-cultural spheres (the upriver and the downriver world, or "the local" and "the foreign"). As such, they are sometimes pitted against each other, in which case the outcome is often unclear. An example of an occasion when *adat* emerged as victorious from such a confrontation is provided by the concluding speech of a curing ritual held in December 1996, a speech which was given in connection with the distribution of rewards (plates and meat) for ritual work at the conclusion of the ritual.[225] This was a rather long speech which Ma Unsir, the man who gave it, did not agree to shorten even though Ma Buno, the *belian* who had led the ritual, was already very late for an important meeting with government officials related to the granting of a loan to the village. In this case, *adat* authority in the form of traditional obligations and adherence to correct form (and perhaps, vanity and concerns with the spirits on the part of the speaker) can be said to have triumphed over government authority and what we might call the practical-economical concerns involved. Ma Buno had to wait until the end of the speech — or at least did so — despite the inconvenience that this meant for him. However, on nearly an equal number of occasions, the outcome was rather the contrary. The government, is crucially significant in Bentian society, and the importance of government authority as a guiding motive for action was very much in evidence during my fieldwork.

The Government as an Authority and a Source of Authority

Despite the persistence and recent resurgence of the importance of *adat* among the Bentian, the significance of government influence — including government authority — has continued to increase, as it has generally done for the last few hundred years, in

[225] The curing ritual in question also represented a minor thanksgiving ritual; it was given, in part, in order to honor and present offerings to the spirit helpers (*mulung*) of the patient (Ma Kerudot) who was a *belian*, which explains why a speech was held in its connection (ordinary curing rituals typically do not feature formal speeches).

connection with a process of increasing Bentian integration with the larger society. I have already described the impact of government influence on the Bentian, particularly with reference to the *manti*: if *adat* can be described as a cornerstone of *manti* authority, then the same is true also for the government. In precolonial and colonial times, titles and various symbolic tokens (emblems, special clothes, red and yellow rice, etc.) provided by the government represented critical support for ambitious *manti* in their leadership ambitions, and thus significantly contributed to a development of greater local integration and stratification, associated with increasing residential concentration. Historically, government interaction has functioned to objectify and solidify the institution of *manti*ship (and that of *adat*), and the ostensibly encompassing authority of the government has provided a principal source of authority which especially the greater *manti* have tapped for purposes both of legitimating their positions and of authorizing the particularities of their rule. In the present situation as well, national rhetoric provides an important source of authority frequently invoked by the *manti* in their speeches. And as among the Meratus, claiming that some particular ruling or advocated course of action represents government principle — even when there exists no such principle having even a remote bearing on the case at hand — is a common strategy of authorization, which, as Tsing (1993:30) observes, has the consequence of "reaffirm[ing] state authority as a prerequisite for political speech while silencing those without claim to a state connection." The institution of *kepala adat* notably still grants an important advantage to some *manti* over others even though not to the extent that it, and the institution of titulary *manti*ship before it, did in the past.

The Bentian have also adopted many ideas and social institutions promulgated by past and present governments, and many people have internalized government ideals to the point that they have become personal aspirations. One example is the notion of a supreme God (*tuhan yang mahaesa*) which as one of the principles of the state ideology is incessantly promulgated by the government through its complexly ramifying politics of religion. It was particularly in response to these politics, more specifically to threats of communist labelling and discrimination in the education system, that adherents to Kaharingan in the province of Central Kalimantan conducted their successful fight for recognition of their religion, which has resulted in a far-reaching rationalization of the religion, including the promotion of Ranying Hatalla Langit as the Kaharingan counterpart of the Almighty. Even though such far-reaching rationalization has only been of marginal significance among the Bentian, and a supreme God had yet to become important in Kaharingan ritual, the *notion* of a supreme God has become centrally important in discourse (as demonstrated, for example, by Ma Putup's wedding speech), as well as to some extent in mythology, and even in the popular, non-ritual beliefs of some Kaharingans. And despite the fact that this development is to a certain degree the result of influence from Muslims and Christians (particularly among those Bentians who

have become Christians themselves), the discoursive importance of the concept seems to me to primarily reflect the influence of government politics, particularly among the non-Christians, for whom the legitimacy of their religious practices and beliefs is a crucial question.

Analogous to this development toward recognition of a supreme God is a development toward a common national identity. A national identity is something that many Bentians today, as in most places of Indonesia, eagerly profess, at least in discourse. Declarations of national loyalty have become part and parcel of most public occasions, no matter how irrelevant they may at times be to the local concerns primarily under consideration. Another related, but perhaps less obvious, effect of government influence is the development of ethnic identity. Even though an ethnic identity is still very weakly developed among the Bentian, the fact that it exists at all (whether in the sense of identification with the category "Bentian" or that of "Dayak") is primarily the result of government influence (i.e. in the form of exonymic usages of the terms in question in administrative discourse, and establishment of administrative districts reflecting ethnic divisions, and more recently, government sponsored or endorsed transmigration or forest product exploitation spurring consciousness of common interests among the inhabitants of the Kalimantan interior).

Among the most influential government ideas to which the Bentian have been subjected are those of development (*pembangunan*) and progress (*kemajuan*). Indeed, most government expectations can theoretically be — and have often been in practice — conceived of in terms of these very general concepts, which have been extensively internalized (as already pointed out, most or possibly all Bentians primarily see benefits from such aspects of "development" as roads, health care, electricity). On the whole, in defiance of any romantic Western illusions, the Bentian also want to become modernized or "developed." In fact, there exists to my knowledge no people in Kalimantan like the Badui of Java (cf. Wessing 1977), the Bali Aga of Bali, or the Sakuddei of the Mentawai Islands (cf. Schefold 1988) who have made it a principle and an institutionalized practice to resist modernization.

Besides "development" and "progress," another, almost equally influential and much internalized government idea to which the Bentian have been intensively subjected is that of "order" (I., *aturan* or *keterbitan*). "More order" seems to me to represent, in an analytical sense at least, the principal message, not only of the New Order government with which it has often been expressly associated, but of all governments that have claimed authority over the Bentian.[226]

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[226] From a sociological point of view, there is, of course, nothing controversial about this proposition, in so far just as the governments who have acted as the Bentian's overlords have to any significant degree represented development agents. A fundamental aspect of "modernization" is, as Weber and Simmel already understood, a process of expansion of an all-encompassing rationalized order.

In the New Order era, "to order" (*mengatur*) marginally integrated communities represented an expressed state policy in a way very similar to the objective to develop them, and an allegation that such societies were "not yet ordered" (*belum diatur*) represented a principal ground for government intervention (cf. Tsing 1993:28). The problem with primitive peoples, as the New Order government saw it, was that they did not have enough order in their lives: primitiveness was synonymous with insufficient orderliness. What "order" referred to in this connection was a rather wide variety of ideal arrangements, ranging from the field of political administration to religious beliefs and daily life in the domestic sphere. Reporting on a situation resembling that of the Bentian, Tsing (1993:92,108) has described how bathing and meal-taking routines in resettlement villages in the Meratus mountains represented targets of government ordering, as well as how locals perceived the government's Family Planning Programme (*Keluarga Berencana* or *KB*), locally focussed on the distribution of contraceptive pills to be taken daily, as aiming at the same goal (the pills representing, in Tsing's, [1993:104], words, "an icon of bureaucratic order"). Even though the Bentian have not been subjected to resettlement, the irregularity of meals and other daily routines such as agricultural and ritual activities represented during my field work a source of annoyance for some village heads and other modernization-minded villagers who had internalized the government discourse on order. Bentians involved in the government-prescribed village administration also tried to enroll people in the Family Planning Programme even though they did not necessarily share the goal of limiting reproduction (reproduction rates being very low, most Bentians, on the contrary, wanted to see more children in the communities). An implicit issue here was personal discipline; it was understood that what the government wanted was a new type of (modern) individual, self-disciplined and orderly. What was also at issue, however, especially for the village heads, was administration. As government representatives and office holders responsible for implementing government order in, and compiling statistical data on, the villages, it very much stood in their interest to have their communities comply — at least on paper, so to speak — with the various forms of order advocated by the government.

The administrative order itself represents one of the most intensively encouraged instances of government-promoted order. Initially primarily concerned with the occupation of prescribed leadership offices, the implementation of taxation schemes, and the codification of *adat*,[227] government expectations regarding administrative order have

[227] *Adat* notably also represents an important example of an institution which Bentians want to make more ordered (e.g. objectified) because of this government ideal of order, and which they, in part, hold on to precisely because it to them represents an "icon of order" (of an indigenous kind). *Adat* has presumably been closely associated with order in local conceptions since its introduction, but this association probably became even stronger (or at least more conscious and urgent) during the New Order era, as a result of this preoccupation of the government with order. In this era, many Bentians came to see *adat* as a primary means by which they could establish a minimal degree of required order

become increasingly extensive and now include detailed procedures for decision-making, set out most comprehensively in the Village Government Law of 1979. A crucial feature of this government-prescribed administrative order is the registration of the population in specific villages and the division of village populations into discrete and numbered households (I., *kaka*). An important objective of the government seems always, but increasingly, to be to have people, and their possessions and activities, firmly located in place, not only for administrative reasons but for exemplary ones as well. It is for this reason that dispersion and mobility — and swidden cultivation which involves both — counted among the principal anathemas of the New Order government (and this of course also helps to explain the fact that mobility is, as Tsing, 1993:155, has noted, a defining feature of the *suku terasing,* i.e. those "isolated populations" which the government has identified as in need of particularly intensive development guidance). The exemplary aspect was also an important reason why the New Order, as Pemberton (1994:5) has argued, attributed such great importance to the staging of national elections, as was, I assume, the restriction of inter-village movement imposed upon the Bentian at the time of these events. This restriction was invoked when Udin, almost six months prior to the national elections in 1997, finally left Temiang for his home village, and was made an example of unlawful conduct by the newly-appointed and strongly government-supportive village head of Datai Munte (Temiang was one of its official hamlets). The new village head did this in a wedding speech, which principally consisted of an attempt to explain to villagers the importance of procuring identity cards. Another expression of the importance of this exemplary aspect is the significance attributed by the New Order and earlier governments to such outward features of order as the alignment of village houses in neat, numbered rows, the fencing of villages and gardens (*kebun*), and the penning or corralling of animals. As a consequence of a rather strong government emphasis on such outward or "ritualistic" aspects of order, what the issue of order primarily seemed to be about for many Bentians was the management of appearances, that is, a concern for satisfying the government's desires through superficial compliance. However, the significance of the issue was by no means reduced to "appearances" for all Bentians; like the ideal of development, the ideal of order had become genuinely affirmed and a matter of deep, intellectual concern for many people. As an example of this — which also illustrates how extensively government notions of order had, in Habermas's (1975) terms, "colonized" most sectors in society — we may take the views of the young *belian* Mancan who saw the rationalization of religion occurring throughout the

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in the eyes of the government, in a situation in which they did not have the means, because of their marginality, to live up to the standard expectations that the government had in this respect of the citizenry. As these Bentians saw it, as long as they had *adat*, they had at least some order: with *adat* they could pass as civilized in at least some elementary sense — even if they would perhaps not pass as fully modern citizens — and thus avoid government intervention.

archipelago as a thoroughly positive development, and complained that unlike on Java, where the government had already "developed the ancestors" (*membina leluhur*, I.), religious beliefs in Kalimantan were not yet perfect (*belum sempurna*, I.) as they had been subjected to too little government guidance.

Among the government-promoted social institutions adopted by the Bentian, foremost in importance is that of the nucleated village. Although at first actively resisted — and until this day still passively resisted by at least some Bentians — this non-indigenous institution, promoted by precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial governments alike, now plays a significant part in all Bentian lives. Even though village buildings, as among the Meratus, may be empty, or single family houses populated with extended kin groups (see Tsing 1993:104), many families have built and live in modern "development houses." Similarly, even though many families "cultivate dispersal as a form of autonomy" and as a means of "staying away from the state" (Tsing 1993:48, 53),[228] a majority — including most *manti* and older people who have a particular interest in development — probably advocate, at least in theory, a greater amount of village as opposed to swidden residence. Alongside the inherent practical advantages of dispersed residence for swidden cultivators and a presumably ancient desire for autonomy among conjugal families and the young, there has also long existed a local ideal of concentration (see Chapter 4), which no doubt has encouraged the Bentian's adoption of this institution. Nevertheless, it is clear that their attitudes toward village residence have become increasingly even more affirmative over time and that this change reflects government influence, as does their present-day consternation over dispersion, which is often equated with dissension and strife.

From the Bentian's point of view, the injunction to concentrate in villages is intimately associated with another government demand, namely that of establishing unity (*persatuan* I.), an objective which has long constituted a local ideal, but which with the *Pancasila* politics of the postcolonial period also became a strongly government-promoted one (along with such associated concepts as *musyawarah,* "public consultation," and *gotong royong,* "collective cooperation"), especially under the stability-obsessed New Order regime. During my fieldwork, village concentration also represented, as many Bentians had come to see it, one of a limited number of ways (recognition of a supreme God being another) in which they, as marginal citizens, could (and should) respond to the government's call for national integration (*persatuan nasional*). All this is not to say that opinions about village residence in this respect were not ambivalent. Village life, like modern life more generally, was commonly seen as characterized by *politik,* that is, by devious or generally strategic schemes of action

[228] In the past, entire Luangan communities are also reported to have fled the Dutch by taking up residence in inaccessible locations.

designed to advance narrow self-interest (cf. Keane 2002:2). Notwithstanding such critical assessments of the consequences of village settlement, however, there existed a somewhat utopian view among the Bentian of residential concentration as tantamount to unification, and a notion of government authority as fundamentally concerned with social unity. The Bentian's tendency to advocate social concentration and unification also represented a perceived *necessity*: given the possibility of government intervention in the case of failure in these respects, there is a notion that communities now, unlike in the past, *have to* stick together if local ways of life and some degree of local autonomy are to be retained. It is recognized, in other words, that "in the era of independence," social life can no longer go on quite as before; at least a higher level of social integration has now to be maintained. Indicating the extent to which these notions have become internalized by many Bentians, I was presented with the "Story of the rotten porcupine" (*kesa tetung boto*) on a number of different occasions. This story was told me by informants who were either critical or ambivalent about the lack of centralized rule in the past and the condition of not yet being "held by the government" (*tenegen pemerintah*). It served to illustrate, in particular, the problems associated with *manti* pride and housegroup autonomy.

> Once the Tementeng people had a lot of *manti*. Hence the saying *Tementeng temenggung turu*, "Tementeng with seven *temanggung*" [*temanggung* is one of the titles which the sultanate awarded to Bentian leaders]. Once, these *manti* were out in the forest on their own. There they caught a porcupine which they were going to eat. However, there was a problem. There was no one to cook it for them. The *manti* argued for a while but not one of them was willing to lower himself so much as to do this. Thus it came to pass that the porcupine ended up rotten, and there is the saying *Tementeng tetung boto*, "Tementeng of the rotten porcupine."

As these examples of government influence indicate, the Bentian have far from always resisted the government and its authority, instead, they have about as often welcomed it. Not only do they embrace many aspects of the ideals which the government has promulgated, but they also regard the government as an agency which has the potential and the responsibility for implementing many of these ideals among them (as Mancan did, with respect to religious beliefs). This to some extent explains the authority of the government among them. The government is authoritative to them, both because they feel that it has the power (through the police and the military) to enforce far-reaching compliance with its regulations, and because it, in their view, has the ability — at least theoretically — to bring about certain things that they desire, especially coveted aspects of development (as manifested on television and, to some extent, among downriver

societies — even though not yet so much, as they frequently complain, among themselves).

Ma Busek, the modernization-minded head of customary law of Datai Munte who formed one of the three *manti* examples discussed earlier in this chapter, provides the ultimate example of the Bentian's tendency to embrace modernization and their inclination to accept the authority of the government (the previously-mentioned village head of the Datai Munte would also make a very good example). As we know, Ma Busek even advocated such government ideals — broached by the timber companies who on behalf of the government acted as development agents in his village — as that swidden cultivation should progressively be given up and replaced by more modern and ordered means of subsistence. He was also eager to have his community abide by local government (*kecamatan*) demands that major rituals (i.e. those involving water buffalo sacrifice) should be reported to, and authorized by permits issued by, the police (in this case the security police, or *SATPAM*, of the neighboring timber company). For this and other reasons, he also attempted to restrict the frequency and length of rituals, particularly of secondary mortuary rituals, for instance, by lecturing to this end in the speeches that he was invited to give during these rituals in his capacity as head of customary law.

Ma Busek was, however, rather extreme in this regard. Even though many people supported (more or less actively) one or another aspect of government policy — such as Ma Buno did with respect to the injunction that water buffalo should be tied or corralled — and frequently claimed to act as spokespersons of the government, most Bentians did not willingly submit to the government in the above-mentioned respects, nor in many others. However, even though they did not, they nevertheless generally took — as already suggested by the wedding speech which gave me the idea to write about authority — the authority of the government as a more or less inevitable fact of life to which they in some way or another adjusted. At least no one contested the legitimacy of government authority directly, notwithstanding that many people sometimes resisted particular government injunctions in practice, or defended practices which conflicted with government principles. And when people resisted government injunctions, they typically did so by in one way or another appealing to, and thereby acknowledging, government authority.

One example of how Bentians applied authority associated with the government, even when they in effect contested it, is provided by a speech given by Ma Bari (the unofficial *kepala adat* of Temiang) at a secondary mortuary ritual in Datai Munte which he was invited to give in the capacity as one of the major *manti* in the area, and as a relative of the deceased. On this occasion (preceding the water buffalo sacrifice), Ma Busek and another *manti* of Datai Munte also gave speeches and a large audience had gathered, including many residents from the nearby timber company and transmigration settlements (mostly Bentians and Benuaqs who had volunteered to move there from nearby locations, but also a fair number of Javanese, including police and other government officials). In

contrast to Ma Busek, who complained over delays in the ritual schedule (reflecting difficulties to catch the water buffalo to be sacrificed), and reminded participants that ordinary activities in the village should continue to run despite the progress of *gombok* rituals — just as the country had never ceased to function despite the recent death of the president's wife — Ma Bari spoke for the legitimacy of local *adat* and water buffalo sacrifice, and he talked about his own village (Temiang) and Datai Munte as if they were two autonomous, equal entities even though the former was officially regarded as a hamlet of the latter. Ma Bari explained that sacrificing water buffaloes was a pan-Indonesian custom (an argument which probably reflected a discussion with me a few nights earlier over a picture of water buffalo sacrifice in Janet Hoskins' 1993 monograph on the Kodi of Sumba) which tradition and proper respect for the ancestors all over the country demanded be performed in so far as resources allowed, which they did now. Ma Bari was also conspicuously dressed up for the event:, wearing a batik shirt (as customary for Indonesian men on formal occasions) and a traditional headcloth (*laung*), neither of which he usually wore. And even though he employed the national language and government rhetoric to a much lesser extent than Ma Busek (a result not only of choice but also of more modest skills in this respect) he nevertheless used them about as extensively as he could, as probably any present-day *manti* would have done in the same situation.

In so far as Ma Bari was authoritative on this occasion, however — and I believe he was, although this is something which I cannot say for certain — it was not primarily the result of his application of government authority (which was unimpressive in comparison with Ma Busek's use of this resource, and may even have appeared crude to the visitors). Neither was it in any other respect a function of being what Rutherford (2003) has called "foreign" — at least not from the point of view of his own people (although from the perspective of the visitors, it may to some extent have been that).[229] Rather, his authority in the situation probably derived most essentially from what could be called his "persistent indigenousness:" his refusal to renounce such local customs and values (e.g. intergenerational reciprocity and respect) which he regarded as right and proper — and his courage to stand up and defend them in a way which was nevertheless accommodating and measured.

Even though Ma Bari's speech was not intended or construed as a critique of the government *per se*, it is clear that through it he contested certain local government ideals. Unlike in Toraja land, mortuary rituals and water buffalo sacrifice had at this time in this

[229] In her *Raiding the Lands of the Foreigners* (2003) Danilyn Rutherford argues that authority in Biak is generally foreign, that is, derived from spheres beyond the local world, and typically based on some degree of monopoly of access to such spheres. More specifically, she argues that Biak authority is based on the *fetishization* of the foreign, a concept which I shall discuss further below. Even though her argument clearly is applicable to much political authority in circulation among the Bentian, it is not, as we see in this connection, applicable to all of it.

part of Kalimantan not yet become unambiguously accepted as *adat* spectacles, but were rather seen as indicators of a failure to adopt a world religion (*agama*) or wholeheartedly affirm development (*pembangunan*), the ultimate goal of the government. For that reason, Ma Bari's speech was by no means unprovocative, and even though some Bentians had on rare occasions performed more confronting and dangerous actions — such as those men who tried to stop the logging of rattan cultivated lands by confronting bulldozers in barricades (see Fried 1995) — it was nevertheless unusually confronting.

In contrast to such actions as Ma Bari's speech and the protests against the timber companies — neither of which represented direct criticism of the government — Bentians most typically responded to government and other outsider agent demands and actions, if not like Ma Busek by outright affirmation, then at least by outward acquiescence — or inconspicuous avoidance. An example in this respect is the intense Bentian inhibition — experienced all too often by myself — to discuss openly or admit altogether the present or past existence of any such aspects of local culture which were or had been strongly condemned by the national government or its predecessors, such as headhunting, slavery, polyandry, or farmhouse residence (cf. Spyer 2000:200 for a description of similar attitudes in Aru). That these aspects of local culture would be suppressed was additionally motivated by the fact that they are perceived as prohibited, and associated with primitiveness — and regarded as such not only by the government and downriver people but also by many Bentian themselves. The discourse on primitiveness — variably focused on such attributes as wildness, animism, backwardness, and lack of order — has deeply influenced Bentian notions of self-identity, and it has probably also been a major factor promoting Bentian submission to government authority. Generating feelings of inferiority, it has played a crucial role in promoting conversion to a world religion, for example, and it has also augmented desires for getting access to various amenities and services associated with modern life.

Attitudes vary between individuals, of course, but on the whole, Bentians have, it seems to me, a fundamentally ambivalent attitude to government authority. They affirm and want to adjust to some government expectations, while they resent others. They also generally want some degree of government involvement in at least some spheres of their lives — even though, on the other hand, they would prefer not to lose too much autonomy. One type of government involvement which they are particularly keen on having consists of the annual subsidy (*Inpres Bantuan Pembangunan Desa)* which the government grants to villages all over the country, and some other subsidies or forms of assistance granted particularly to "isolated" or "left-behind" villages (*desa terpencil, desa tertinggal*). In order to obtain these and other forms of material assistance, the Bentian actively, and quite frequently, try to attract the attention of the government, in particular by petitioning (e.g. through formal letters) the various government agencies responsible in the different cases, but also by making impromptu demands whenever opportunities

arise. Such an opportunity arose in November 2002 when the provincial governor passed through their area in order to inspect the condition of the interprovincial road, and representatives of several Bentian communities stopped his retinue of 28 cars in order to present gifts of rattan mats and coconuts — and make requests for economic assistance to be used for the purchase of rice and the restoration of the decaying grand *lou* (*rumah adat*) of their villages (Kompas 2002). Ironically, in such contexts, including this case, it has typically been the Bentian's condition of being less developed than other peoples which has provided the proposed basis for their requests — a condition which in other contexts is something which they desperately want to conceal from the government. The same condition has notably also induced feelings in Bentians of being the object of government discrimination — given the relative lack of development in their area as compared to other areas — as well as feelings of injustice — given the relatively great outflow of resources from their area through outsider exploitation, and the rather restricted flow of revenues back into it. These sentiments also nourish their desires to obtain such assistance. However, it is clear that the Bentian's eagerness to demand assistance from the government (and, occasionally, from the companies operating in their area) is not only motivated by their desire to get "their fair share." It also reflects a more straightforward desire for modern things and facilities in themselves, as well as, to some degree, diminished "communal self-reliance" (in its turn reflecting expectations that, in the "age of independence," certain services should be provided by the government). Indeed, it seems to me that there exists among the Bentian a fair incidence of what Sellato (2001:124,133), in reference to another part of East Kalimantan, has described as "'assistance' mentality" — which is not to say that their propensity to seek assistance is not motivated by a range of other factors as well, including aspirations to overcome the stigma of primitiveness. One example of "assistance mentality" is precisely the above-mentioned requests made to the governor, and the fact that many villages have been unable to mobilize local resources to repair their grand *lou,* in part because of expectations that they might get government assistance for this purpose.

To an important extent, the Bentian's ambivalent attitude towards the government also reflects the often inconsistent relationship that the government has with them. At times the government makes rather dictatorial and difficult demands on them, requiring, for example, that they give up important cultural practices, or surrender their lands to timber or plantation companies, while at other times it claims to protect their *adat* or offers them sizeable endowments, sometimes even without request. Different governments have also often had different, sometimes contradictory opinions with respect to different socio-cultural institutions in Bentian society — *manti*ship and longhouses providing cases in point. There is, nevertheless, some consistency in how the government acts towards the Bentian, indeed in how all the different governments that over time have represented their overlords have acted toward them, a consistency that may perhaps also

explain their tendency to refer unspecifically to past and present governments as "the government" (*pemerintah),* a tendency which has notably influenced my own analysis of the institution.

Past and present governments have been marked by an authoritarian attitude in their dealings with the Bentian, and the communication has mostly been one-way from them to the Bentian. At the same time, all governments have been characterized by a rather irregular and marginal concern with the Bentian, and a limited presence in their area, conditions which principally are a result of the distance of the Bentian area from administrative centers, the difficulties of transport within it, and its low population density. What the government will do next with respect to the Bentian, and what it really stands for in relation to them, or in other respects, has, at least from the Bentian's point of view, typically had little predictability and transparency. Besides inconsistencies in government policy, this fact again reflects the Bentian's relative remoteness, and the marginal presence of the government in their area, circumstances which critically influence the Bentian's relations to government authority more generally.

Besides sustaining their marginal and undeveloped condition — as well as the comparatively great autonomy that they enjoy — a centrally important consequence that these circumstances have is that Bentian notions about the government's expectations and orientation often represent mere assumptions, and not infrequently, misunderstandings. The restricted communication and day-to-day interaction with the government also entails a situation in which claims to government authority are often unauthorized in practice and its use frequently is at variance with the government's intentions. The same conditions furthermore encourage what could be described as the "fetishization" of government authority, an attribute of its use investigated in another marginal Indonesian society by Rutherford (2003). As employed among the Bentian, government authority indeed frequently has a rather fetishized or talismanic character, that is, it is applied in a more or less self-referential manner with little constraint in moving between different contexts, as if possessing an intrinsic potency, and its appeal is, to a significant extent, a function of its alien aura and associated inscrutability — all factors which reflect the absence of the government. To some degree, it is also precisely the fact that attempts to invoke government authority (e.g. calls on the police) often remain disregarded which generates such fetishized use of authority. As Rutherford, commenting on Freud's understanding of the term, has observed, the fetish, born out of unfulfilled desire, "works all the better because it fails" (2003:21). Such failures, then, are not total failures, but, rather, partial successes, involving some kind of "secondary gratification." In the Bentian's case, the fetishization of government authority enables them to borrow for their own purposes (for use among themselves) a certain measure of the authority of the *absent* government — which would otherwise be lost to them. Such use of government authority may indeed be quite effective — in that some people become persuaded to do or believe certain things

as a result of others' application of it — even while it often is unsanctioned. The fact that the absence of the government enables what we could call a rather creative use of its authority also enables the latter's domestication, involving among other things, adjustment to local expectations of what is authoritative. Often — as in the case of Ma Bari's above-mentioned ritual speech — the purpose of the use of government authority is indeed to defend or legitimize local ways or views in the face of government demands threatening them.

Principal examples of fetishized government authority used by the Bentian are government rhetoric and the national language, which to Bentians are closely associated with the government. As Ma Bari's example also illustrates, these resources may be used in contravention of government policy, and they are used in a wide variety of contexts far beyond the political field in order to authorize matters which the government does not seem to have anything to do with. A good example of extensively used fetishized national rhetoric is the concept of the almighty God (*Tuhan yang mahaesa*). This concept seemed to me to be often used more or less purely "for effect" (an effect resulting from its metonymic connection with official discourse) with little sincerity in the sense of commitment to monotheism — as when Ma Putup invoked the concept in his wedding speech, where it, in fact, served to promote his attempt to defend the official legitimacy and practical relevance of Kaharingan religion and ritual. Sometimes, however, fetishized government authority does not seem to play any obvious authorizing role, as, for example, when children mimicked national rhetoric in play, or when adults addressed dogs in Indonesian, two somewhat curious practices which caught my attention during fieldwork. Another example in the same category is that Ma Putup had inscribed, apparently mainly for his own amusement, the words *Alat Pembangunan Desa* (I., "Village Development Device") on a blowpipe dart container that he kept in his farmhouse, explaining that the container held darts that he shot at monkeys marauding in his ricefield. Despite appearing to have no straightforward instrumental purpose, however, such instances of fetishization of government authority can be observed to constitute expressive action, more precisely, they involve what we might call a "therapeutic meditation" over precisely those disconcerting features of government authority that call for its fetishization, such as its unpredictability and opaqueness, or what Rutherford with reference to "the foreign" on the Indonesian margins more generally has called its "irreducibly inexpressible experience" (2003:20). Common to such expressive actions was also that they typically amounted to some sort of parody of the government (this was obvious, for instance, in the teasing yet official-sounding ways in which Indonesian was used in the above cases) at the same time as they enacted the problematic, asymmetrical relationship that the Bentian have with their rather authoritarian, yet absent, overlords. Often, as in the case of Ma Putup's dart container, such actions also in some oblique sense played with the notion of primitiveness imposed

upon them by the government, or in some other respect "tried on" the government's perspective *vis-à-vis* themselves (talking Indonesian to dogs, for instance, can be seen to have involved a kind of juxtaposition of the government's authoritarian relation to the Bentian with that which they entertain *vis-à-vis* their dogs, a kind of "play with positions," stating that the Bentian are like dogs to the Indonesian government.)[230] For these reasons, these examples of "expressive fetishization" may well have involved some degree of what we might call "psychological empowerment" — a kind of temporary "victory through wit" — even though perhaps not providing any true social authorization (like the Balinese cockfight, they would, of course, change nothing in that respect).[231]

Another example of fetishization of government authority, is the *belian sentiu,* a curing ritual to which I have already made reference. This ritual, which is largely conducted in Kutai Malay (and sometimes Indonesian), and features spirit familiars, ceremonial practices, offerings and paraphernalia associated with the royal court of the Sultanate of Kutai borrow aspects of (primarily past) government authority, and it seems reasonable to infer that its increasing popularity relates to the expansion of the social universe of its practitioners and their increasingly frequent encounters with government authority. During larger *sentiu* rituals large temporary shrines (*balei*) conceived of as miniature "palaces" (*keraton*) function as focal points of the ritual activity, much of which is aimed at expressing submissive devotion (*semah*). *Belian sentiu* originated only in the early twentieth century, but has since spread widely among East Kalimantan Luangans, often at the expense of older forms of Luangan curing so that in some places it has entirely replaced these. Among the Bentian, where it has been performed since the 1970s, the spread of the ritual has coincided with an unprecedently strong pressure on them to adopt a world religion (*agama*) along with other attributes of civilization, and, more recently, bourgeoning attempts at rationalization of the indigenous religion (for an extended analysis of the ritual in this context see Herrmans 2004). For Bentians, the ritual also stands, when contrasted with other rituals, for downriver ways — and more specifically, a downriver aesthetic — a feature which is said to make it especially appealing to the young but which also significantly contributes, in my interpretation, to its general authority in the society. At the same time, however, the ritual is very much a local construct, devoted to local concerns, as indicated by the fact that many of the Malay

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[230] In this connection it may be interesting to note that an informant of Tsing's among the South Kalimantan Meratus described them as "the chickens of the government" (1993:103).

[231] An essentially similar interpretation of the function of the fetish in a general context has been made by Michael Jackson (1998:75-82). Jackson regards the fetish as "an instrument of existential control." As he puts it, "through the fetish one magically regains control over a situation in which one's mastery was undermined or lost. The fetish makes a person feel more ontologically secure and restores self-confidence ... because it mediates a passage from powerlessness to empowerment, from passivity to activity" (1998:81).

chants featured in it are verbatim translations of the Luangan chants of older forms of ritual. Like Wana and Meratus rituals, which both also invoke aspects of government authority, (see Atkinson 1984 and Tsing 1987, respectively), *belian sentiu* can thus be said to "incorporate the power of state models yet maintain the distinctive features of the local society" (Bowen 1991:262-63). The fact that it invokes, in accordance with a widespread pattern in marginal Indonesian societies, a government absent in both space and time should not be regarded as peculiar here, as such distant borrowing of authority may in fact be particularly well-adapted to the task of advancing such double agendas.

Despite the overt preoccupation of *belian sentiu* with past forms of government authority, however, it is as much a response to present-day urgencies associated with the agency of the current government. Like the Meratus *dewa* ritual, which addresses Banjar Malay spirits and spirits associated with past east coast sultanate courts, it would seem tempting to interpret *belian sentiu* as a form of "ritual accommodation to the state," more particularly, as a "magical" attempt to satisfy the state's prominent ritualistic demands for subservience and civilized manners by way of appeasing refined non-local spirits with, among other things, elegant downriver style dancing and food offerings (see Tsing 1993:77,94-96,203; also Herrmans 2004). Even though no informant ever said as much, such an interpretation would certainly make sense in the light of state expectations and state relations among both the Bentian and the Meratus, as would Tsing's conclusion (1993:102) that such "ritual offerings of submission" are "intended to evade a more costly disciplinary regime," that is, a more systematic government interference in local affairs, causing loss of autonomy. It still seems plausible that *belian sentiu*, which in comparison with other rituals is particularly concerned with illness caused by downriver spirit agencies, represents, at least in part, a response to uncertainties and vicissitudes arising from authoritarian and unpredictable government rule (and other distressing "downriver" expectations), in other words, that it represents a means of coping with exigent socio-political anxieties, making the shaman of such rituals, if not quite, in Tsing's (1993:85) words, someone who "manage[s] regional terrorism," then at least someone who deals with disconcerting external influence.

The example of *belian sentiu* and my discussion about fetishization should not be taken to mean that all the influence of the government on the Bentian has been significantly transformed through an empowering process of domestication, however, or that it has not caused any loss of local autonomy or distinctive features of the local society. Only some Bentian encounters with the government have taken place within what Tsing has called a "creative space of misunderstandings" (1993:31). Many times government influence has affected the Bentian in a rather straightforward way, and over time, local society has significantly changed in response to this influence, as a consequence having become deprived of much of its former autonomy. The fact that the Bentian take government authority for granted amounts to more than a deferent or

accommodating attitude. Already by itself, it tells of the fact that they are now in a seemingly irrevocable sense "subservient" (*suaka*) to the government — there was a time, however, when they, as they themselves remember, were not, when government authority was straightforwardly resisted.

Conclusion: The Dual and Historically Variable Character of Bentian Political Authority

In this chapter I have investigated the exercise and constitution of political authority, a concept which I define as authority concerned with the organization of communities and other supra-familial affairs. I have been primarily interested in what I have identified as the three principal institutions, or the trinity, of political authority: *manti*ship, *adat*, and the government. A special concern throughout the analysis has been how the integration and general articulation of the Bentian with the larger world and the influence of exogenous factors have affected their conceptions of, reactions to and uses of political authority.

*Manti*ship is a somewhat heterogeneous institution whose character has varied historically, along with the structure of the society as a whole. Before integration with the Sultanate of Kutai, leadership among the Bentian was mainly restricted to housegroup leadership: the *manti* primarily acted as heads over a typically small number of swidden-making families who on occasion (e.g. at times of ritual) came together in small longhouses (*lou*). The position of the *manti* at this time was largely conceived of in terms of kinship; its legitimacy derived from the *manti* being related to and representing the "trunk" or "source" (*puun*) of these families. However, the institution of *manti*ship was also closely associated with the exercise of *adat*, and had probably been so since its inception: the *manti* negotiated conflicts and other affairs (e.g. marriages) between and within housegroups in accordance with what is, at least today, a highly sanctified code of customary law. Besides family heads, the early *manti* thus represented a kind of legal expert, and besides kinship connections (ascribed or acquired), their knowledge of, and skills in, applying *adat* represented a principal source of authority for them, as it still does. Furthermore, charisma, in the sense of potency (*kekuasaan*) and as an expression of ancestral or other spirit connections, was another important factor in this respect, as was the display of status and the mobilization of followers through ritual, and the accumulation through trade or formal exchange expeditions (*roing*) of the traditional valuables which formed the principal medium through which *adat* affairs were negotiated and resolved.

In the nineteenth century, however, in conjunction with the development of trade and tributary contacts with the sultanate — including title distribution by the sultan to local

leaders — and some important local developments partly induced by these contacts such as the establishment of nucleated villages, the construction of durable, "communal" longhouses, the introduction of water buffaloes and rattan cultivation, and some ritual innovations, a semi-hereditary community leadership gradually emerged — while at the same time the society as a whole became increasingly differentiated. At the turn of the nineteenth century, the power and social capital of some of the *manti* were much greater than that of others, and greater than they had ever been for their predecessors — or than they were to become for their successors. Indeed, for a short time, especially in larger villages in which the leaders received special labor prestations and their families enjoyed a special authority, and special *adat* regulations applied to the *manti*, a degree of stratification can even be said to have existed among the Bentian (even though the term "*manti*" never really designated a rank, but only a position). However, with the abolishment of slavery and the progressive introduction of a new political structure alongside the old by the Dutch in the early twentieth century, and with the abolishment of titulary *manti*ship and the local appropriation of nationalistic, anti-feudal ideologies in the postcolonial period, the great *manti* lost the legitimacy of their overlordship along with most of their special authority at the same time as Bentian society once again became more egalitarian. Today, the office of *kepala adat* remains as a vestige from the era of the great *manti,* providing some of their descendants with a special authority — although radically reduced in comparison with that of their forefathers.

The Bentian of today clearly do not represent a very hierarchical society. It would, I believe, be incorrect to regard them as ranked, in the manner, for instance, that their Benuaq neighbors have typically — and, in my opinion, somewhat stereotypically — been regarded as ranked. This is not to deny that, for *a restricted period of time*, the Bentian, or part of them, approached such a state. On the other hand, the Bentian have possibly never been totally egalitarian. In the first place, the *manti* — whether housegroup heads or community leaders — have probably always been shown noticeable respect. In the second place, status differences between the *manti* probably always existed, even before integration with the sultanate. Today, at least, there are *manti* of very different status, and most Bentians subscribe, despite acknowledged affirmation of an egalitarian ethos associated with the era of Independence, to a view that *manti*ship should persist. Indeed, most even concur, if generally somewhat ambivalently, with the view that there should exist a head of customary law and a village head holding ultimate authority over everybody else, and that leadership legitimately can — or even should — be inherited. Thus, leadership has not only been objectively variant, the Bentian are also unsure as to what the ideal leadership structure would be like. Leadership should be carried out in accordance with *adat*, on that, most would agree. But people have differing views in respect to what kind of leadership successful implementation of *adat* requires, not infrequently reflecting the personal interests of the speaker. Illustrations are the

opinions of Ma Busek — who was an official *kepala adat* of great *manti* descent — and those of Ma Lombang — who represented an ambitious family *manti* — on the prevalence of polyandry in upriver communities. According to Ma Busek, this practice, which he deeply deplored (not surprisingly, considering the articulation of his interests with the government's), had never been *adat*, and the fact that it was practiced in the upriver communities, unlike in his own, indicated that there was no single, strong leader in the upriver communities able to supervise adherence to *adat*. According to Ma Lombang, on the other hand, this practice (towards which he seemed to hold a rather neutral attitude) represented *adat* in the upriver communities but not in his own, a condition which in his view primarily reflected the fact that in the upriver communities several *manti* ruled together in cooperation, making them, unlike their downriver counterparts, strong enough to maintain this *adat* (on account of enabling them to resolve the problems — such as conflicts between jealous husbands — likely to arise from it).

As suggested by these statements of Ma Busek and Ma Lombang, and as my results more generally bear out, Bentian society cannot comfortably be classified as "hierarchical" any more than "egalitarian," but is more appropriately regarded as an intermediate — or better, indeterminate — entity, one which has, like its Kachin counterpart (see Leach 1954), oscillated between a more egalitarian and a more hierarchical mode, a movement determined, most decisively, by the historically and locally variable politico-economical articulations of the local society with the larger region. This observation calls into question a dominant tendency in the Borneo ethnography (which, ironically, was spurred by Leach's 1950 report on the longhouse societies of Sarawak) to classify the local societies as either stratified or egalitarian, a tendency which, as Armstrong (1992:194) has remarked, amounts to a view of these societies as "essential types" and as "historically static."[232]

Through its regional approach, my study also exposes another limitation which, as Alexander (1992:208) has observed, characterized the studies effectual in establishing the stratified-egalitarian dichotomy in Borneo (i.e. Freeman 1970; Geddes 1954; Morris 1953), namely, their tendency to regard "the political structure ... [as] functionally related to the conditions of agricultural production in essentially *autonomous economies*" (my emphasis). Furthermore, through my analysis of the institution of *manti*ship — and its double function as housegroup and community leadership — the present study argues that there are basic affinities between the political systems of the so-called egalitarian and stratified societies (e.g. what Leach 1950:61 coined the "house owning group"), a fact

[232] Strictly speaking, Borneo and others societies are, of course, never *essentially* egalitarian or hierarchical; inequality and equality being, as Alexander (1992:208) and Armstrong (1992:205) have noted, "culturally constituted," these qualities are not primordial givens. Rather, societies are typically — almost essentially, it would seem — flexible social constructions, capable of far-reaching and rapid transformation, not least in Borneo.

which also, like the historically and locally variable character of Bentian leadership, challenges the division of Borneo societies in these terms. Another fact which leads to the same conclusion is that ideals of hierarchy as well as equality, on the one hand, and ascription as well as achievement, on the other, combine to provide legitimacy for the institution of *manti*ship.

Besides a historically variable tendency for *manti*ship to be hereditary, there has probably always existed a tendency for it to be predicated on the principle of precedence both within housegroups in which *puun* status legitimizes the authority of house heads over their "descendants," and on the level of communities (*benua*) in which certain *manti* held a superior status because their *lou* ranked as the *puun* of others. Although such status is in reality often acquired to a large extent — as illustrated by Ma Lombang's relationships to his "followers" — it serves to make the authority of those who hold it appear legitimate and inevitable by suggesting that it is a function of its holders' positions in a "natural," unalterable hierarchy. Another example of hierarchy serving to legitimize the authority of the *manti* is what I, following Kelly (1993), have called a "hierarchy of virtue," more precisely, a system of "differential moral evaluation," which postulates that the *manti* deserve their positions — and the society needs them to hold them — due to their superior knowledge and generosity in the field of social relations. This is another sense in which *manti*ship is about "kinship." According to this ideal model, which in contrast with precedence is locally understood in terms of achievement rather than ascription, *manti*ship is about organizing local relations in accordance with the goals of the common good and communal harmony, and a number of elementary "relation-affirming values" such as reciprocity, respect and responsibility over kin. At the same time, however, differential moral evaluation stimulates social differentiation and facilitates the cultivation of potentially divisive status and power interests by the *manti*. *Manti* authority is in that respect a double-edged sword, and this aspect explains a certain aversion or ambivalence that many Bentians during my fieldwork expressed (in private) with respect to the institution. More generally, as well, Bentian political authority has what I have called two sides. This is true even of *adat* towards which I never heard anyone express aversion or ambivalence. The principles and maxims, the adjudicative and consultative meetings, and the system of ceremonial exchange, of store-bought white plates which constitute this almost inviolable institution express and promote community harmony and so-called relation-affirming values, as well as what I have called a "moral economy." The system of *adat* simultaneously serves, through its aspects as an economy, and by providing a corpus of legitimate but restrictively accessible knowledge, to maintain power with the powerful. Also, *adat* provides the means for compensating for injured *amour propre* and other offenses to individuals. It thus seems that the maintenance of practical co-existence represents, as in the case of ritualization, a kind of

ultimate goal of *adat*, pursued, if necessary, at the expense of the other values with which it is associated.

While several distinct notions of hierarchy thus play an important role in legitimizing *manti* authority, a presumably ancient egalitarian ideology holds an at least equal importance in this respect. This ideology consists of such notions as the principal distinguishing feature of the *manti* is not any special quality or ability not shared by ordinary people but, instead, the *manti*'s ambition or will to power. These notions may be compared with King's (1985:130) statement that "[r]anks ... according to Maloh [another Dayak group] ideology, did not emerge as the result of the human lust to power ... rather, they were endowed by God." In contrast to such a way of seeing things, the Bentian notions discussed here suggest that *manti*ship is at least theoretically attainable by anyone (or by any housegroup head, at least), and they acknowledge that competitive status interests constitute an important motive for power. Also, they legitimize *manti*ship, not by reference to a superindividual order, but through individual characteristics, more precisely, an inner forcefulness or fervor — often described in terms of soul strength (*tokeng juus*) — a capacity which makes some men — like Kiai, the protagonist *manti* of our story — particularly capable as leaders. Thus this ideology also serves, like the principle of precedence, to naturalize the authority of the *manti*.

Another thing which this "ideology of ambition" does, in conjunction with that of moral virtue mentioned above, is explain my finding of an occurrence among the Bentian of what I have called two contrary forms of charisma — which are analogous with the two sides of political authority described above — the one centered on such characteristics as enterprise, vitality, and fortitude, and the other on such qualities as composure, dignity, and deference. However, despite the demonstrated importance of appearance for the authority of individual *manti*, Bentian political authority is not predominantly charismatic in Weber's sense, nor is it primarily traditional (even though the association of *adat* with the ancestors lends a significant measure of sanctity to it). Instead, in my opinion, Bentian political authority is most fundamentally what I have termed value-rational, that is, the legitimacy and appeal of the institutions of *manti*ship and *adat* rest most basically upon a number of deeply shared social values — consisting of the above-mentioned relation-affirming ones as well as others like consensus, non-confrontation, indirectness, and precedence — whose validity in their turn reflects their recurrent invocation or enactment in daily life, religious ritual, and, not the least important, the formal occasions (i.e. the adjudicative and consultative meetings, and the plate-centered exchange procedures) which in local views represent the sphere of *adat.* Especially significant in this respect is, I have observed, the omnipresent plate exchange, which provides a model for how to ideally engage in social relations. The comparatively strong hold of these values among the Bentian is demonstrated by the persistence of what I have called a "kinship orientation," evident not only in their ceremonial *adat* economy,

but also in their more informal "everyday redistributive economy" (i.e. in their "moral economy"), and it is, to an important extent, this kinship orientation which provides the rationale for the common view that the Bentian cling unusually strongly to *adat*.

By political authority being value-rational I have not only meant that particular *adat* principles and *manti* actions typically correspond to certain deeply held values, but also the important fact that the general form which the exercise of political authority takes — whatever its content in terms of the the particular verdicts and statements made by the *manti* in the course of this exercise — is itself value-rational. Thus the system of ceremonial exchange is authoritative because it is consonant with the Bentian ideals and commonsense experiences of affirming one's relations and sharing one's resources, and the consultative and adjudicative meetings conducted collectively by the *manti* are authoritative because they represent, in themselves, enactments of what Geertz (in an attempt to characterize the essence of Indonesian *adat*), has formulated as a "publicly exhibited social agreement," expressing an "indigenous sense of justice as social consonance" (1983:209-10).

The form of the exercise of political authority significantly contributes to the force of political authority for another reason as well, namely, in that it tends to be highly formalized. In the first place, given the Bentian's "form- and formalization-mindedness," this aspect makes it correspond to yet another basic value and inclination. More importantly, however, formalization serves to inhibit contestation. Not only during *perkara* and other *adat* meetings, but also on such occasions as the ritual speeches, the *manti*'s evening monologues, and *siu* (the institution of "issuing commands"), the concrete form which the exercise of authority takes restricts its application and makes contestation difficult. In Bentian society, being authoritative is thus to an important extent a function of the structural preconditions inherent in the organization of social action — as well as of the personal skills of the *manti* (and other people wishing to be authoritative) in employing various "authorizing techniques." Especially for the *manti*, a particularly important category of skills in this respect is their talking skills, including adeptness in using the "language of the ancestors," the rhetoric and vocabulary associated with the Indonesian State, and what Searle (1976) termed "directives."

Value-rationality is thus not the only important factor determining how authoritative the exercise of political authority is. The basic values that I have discussed are only sometimes relevant or applicable, just as there is not an *adat* for every situation (or *adat* frequently is indeterminate, as in the case of polyandry). But even when the basic values are applicable, other, "non-value related" factors are typically also pertinent, and these sometimes outweigh any values. Besides the more or less successful use of various authorizing techniques already mentioned, another important factor is the compatibility of the exercise of political authority with the exigencies and practical possibilities applying in a given situation. To be authoritative, leadership cannot be entirely utopian,

it must also to some extent be goal-rational, or at least appear credible. What this means above all in the present situation is that the leadership should be feasible under the conditions provided by government regulations and ideology.

The government is today an authority very much taken for granted, to whose overlordship the Bentian generally submits, even though they may be critical of particular aspects of government policy. Consequently, the government is, together with *adat*, the principal source of political authority explicitly invoked in Bentian society, and it is as such incessantly tapped by the *manti* as well as by other people, in a very wide range of spheres of action. Since long ago, government support has also provided a crucially important criterion for legitimacy in the field of leadership, and an important general consequence of government influence has been an increasing preoccupation with legality — in the sense of congruence with government *as well as adat* law — as a yardstick of the permissible or desirable. *Adat*, as I have argued, may itself have been introduced by the Sultanate of Kutai, and it has most certainly become more objectified in reponse to government expectations regarding administrative order. *Adat*'s present-day urgency is also in large part a function of the Bentian's relationship with the government, in particular of the threat to their political autonomy that it involves. Despite this influence of the government on Bentian *adat*, the latter has over time become defined increasingly in opposition to the former, so that they now represent antithetical authorities, associated with different ways of life and value-systems.

Other important consequences of government influence on the Bentian that I have discussed are developments toward local and regional integration, residential concentration, monotheism, nationalism, ethnic awakening, and socio-cultural rationalization or "ordering." However, despite the fact that the government through these developments has thoroughly and irreversibly transformed a number of aspects of Bentian society, it has been relatively absent and done comparatively little in terms of development in the Bentian area (a result, in large part, of the geographical remoteness of the Bentian), and what it has done has typically been characterized by a high degree of unpredictability from the Bentian's point of view. As a consequence, the Bentian are, and feel, politically marginalized, a predicament which at once spurs an ambition for national integration and enables a considerable degree of political autonomy. Another important consequence — particularly of the fact that attempts to call on the government often remain unanswered — is that government authority as used among the Bentian commonly is fetishized: it is invoked flexibly across contexts somewhat as if possessing an intrinsic potency and, not infrequently, in ways which are at variance with the government's expectations.

The appeal of government authority among the Bentian is to an important degree the result of its alien and opaque character, although the government's apparent (but somewhat seldom realized) potential for bringing about coveted aspects of development

represents another important factor contributing to this authority. In comparison with *adat*, the government also derives its authority not so much from any values such as representing what Bentians *consider right*, as from its perceived ability to provide them with certain things and conditions that they *desire* (although there are certain policies associated with the government, such as the ban on slavery and the promotion of village residence, which they affirm, at least partly, on moral grounds). As I have emphasized, the Bentian have internalized many government ideals to the point that they have become personal ambitions, and, in the main, they want to become modernized. This does not mean, however, that the Bentian's generally acquiescent attitude toward the government is only a reflection of the appeal of government authority among them. The Bentian have a fundamentally ambivalent attitude toward the government. Even though they generally welcome its authority, they disapprove of many particular views that it holds, such as those regarding swidden cultivation, and they also resent its overly authoritarian attitude towards them. To a certain degree, the Bentian's acquiescence to government authority is based on a perceived necessity, that is, on the fact that the government has the power to enforce far-reaching compliance with its regulations, and that it could, in their case (due to their relatively undeveloped condition, making them classifiable as a population in need of intensive development guidance), respond to non-compliance with extensive interventions which could cause loss of Bentian autonomy. Indications of this are an acute sensitivity to practices disapproved by the government, and the fact that superficial compliance is typically communicated even when there, in fact, exists some point of contention.

6. General Conclusions

It is now time to sum up the results of this study and to highlight what we have learnt about Bentian authority, and about authority more generally, from this exploration of how authority is expressed and constituted in and through Bentian social action in the spheres of kinship, religion, and politics. I will not reiterate here the findings that *specifically* pertain to the expression and constitution of authority within the spheres of kinship, religion and politics; for these, summaries can be found in the conclusions of chapters three, four, and five, respectively.

In *Freedom and Civilisation* (1947), Malinowski set out to investigate the role of freedom in human society. This led him to consider authority as a phenomenon which potentially restricts freedom, as well as a fundamental precondition of freedom. It also gave him occasion to comment on, in a number of passages, what characterizes authority *per se*, in "primitive society," and in human civilization more generally. Among other things, he made the broad claim that "authority [is] inevitable and indispensable to all social organization," and he argued that authority is "necessary for the successful run of an activity," with "activity" here, in particular, referring to "concerted" and "purposive" activity (1947:185,168, cf.167). In other words, he argued, as Hoebel (1958:222) has acknowledged, that authority is a "functionally universal component of organized social life." However, despite this recognition by Malinowski of a generic significance of authority in human life, the interest of anthropology in authority has, for the most part, been restricted to political authority. Symptomatic here is Hoebel's decision, in his essay on "Authority in Primitive Societies," to simply leave out of consideration all other forms of authority except "authority in the application of political and legal sanctions," even though he acknowledges that "any comprehensive study of authority would necessarily require an analysis of the total system of social control" (1958:224-25). Another, related restriction or bias of anthropological approaches to authority, already evident in Hoebel's delimitation of his interest, is, as Knutsson (1967:22) has noted, a tendency to emphasize such features as sanction and coercion. This tendency is manifest, for instance, in Raymond Firth's definition of authority as "the ability to exercise power through the application of sanctions" (1964:123, quoted in Knutsson.1967:23), and also in Malinowski's definition of political authority as "the legally vested power to establish norms, to take decisions, and to enforce them through the use of sanction by coercion" (1947:248). As the other side of the same coin, the question of authority has in many anthropological understandings tended to become reduced to one of power, especially, to one of *legitimate* power, an indicative example here being Bohannan's (1958:3) definition of authority as "institutionalized power."

In contrast to such restrictively political or institutional approaches to authority, this study has conducted an exploration of authority in a "total" or wider sense, as a generic

aspect of social life beyond relations of domination and social control. In further contrast to an earlier dominant anthropological approach to authority, it has not proceeded from a preconceptualized understanding of authority as it functions in institutionalized Western settings.[233] In other words, I have adopted a maximally broad conception of authority — encompassing, among other things, authority relevant in situations of "self-authorization" — and I have attempted to describe authority as I encountered it through a systematic exploration of authority in three broadly defined fields of social life in a society which might seem like a rather unlikely candidate for an authority study, considering the relatively uninstitutionalized and unobjectified character of authority present in it, and which was not even initially chosen for an authority study in the first place. Nevertheless, I have still had certain preconceptions with respect to what I set out to seek. It was from the outset my aim to look for authority from an action perspective. My principal concern has been with authority as it is expressed and embedded in social action, particularly in what I have called "processes of authorization." Thereby, my intention has been to explore certain very basic aspects of authority in Bentian society, namely, what is authoritative, what is authority used to authorize, how is it used, and why is it effective?

What, then, have been the gains from adopting this approach to authority? What has it revealed about authority and what has it revealed about the society concerned? A principal benefit, as I see it, is that it has involved a close-range investigation of the motives and reasons why people submit to authority, something which, as Steven Lukes (1987:64) has noted, Weber's analysis of authority fails to do, in spite of its other benefits. However, my approach to authority has also enabled a better understanding of certain aspects of the constitution of authority which structural approaches have only poorly illuminated. By focusing on how authority is used in practice — itself a principal benefit of this approach — it has brought attention to certain properties which it is advantageous for authority to have in order for it to be effective. Taken together, these properties suggest that authority is complexly embedded in society, and thus that we need to know society in depth in order to know authority. More specifically, they indicate that the *form and organization of action* in society, are especially important factors in this regard. Being effectively authoritative is to an important extent a function of the manner in which authority is presented through action, and of the way in which situations and relations in which it is communicated are organized.

One aspect of the form and organization of action which has emerged in this study as especially influential in facilitating authority is formalization. As we have seen, formalization is a rather conspicuous aspect of Bentian action, influential in all of the three principal analytical fields explored. Indeed, since such a great proportion of all

[233] For an example of an approach explicitly contrary to the one that I am taking here, see Knutsson (1967, especially 1967:24).

exercise of authority among the Bentian involves some aspect of formalization, it would be warranted to classify Bentian authority as "largely formal," a feature which Malinowski (1947:186) attributed to "primitive authority" in general. What Malinowski primarily had in mind was the observation that authority in so-called tribal societies tends to be conventionalized in the sense of conforming to "well-defined, traditionally established rules of procedure" (1947:186). This observation, as we have seen, is valid also for the Bentian, for instance, with respect to the formal discussions through which customary law is exercised, for ritual, or for the framed performances of requests and orders that I have analyzed. As I have demonstrated, formalization in these and other contexts is not merely a convention, however, but a kind of authorizing device, sometimes strategically employed, which serves to promote the interests of the user or other people, and augment the users' and the occasion's authority. As I use the word here it also involves other aspects than adherence to convention or prescribed form, and it refers to a phenomenon much more complex than the one alluded to by Malinowski.

By adhering to prescribed form, formalization promotes an identification of the activity and situation affected as an instance of a more general phenomenon (e.g. tradition) — or, in other words, amounts to what I in a loose sense of the term have called "entextualization" — which has the effect of imbuing the particular action and situation with the authority that is attributed to the general phenomenon. In the senses of what Irvine (1979) calls "emergence of a central situational focus" and the "invoking of positional identities," formalization works to insure the reception of what is communicated, and serves to set this off from *un*framed messages as something important. With respect to what she calls "increased code structuring" and "code consistency," on the other hand, it serves to establish a code of communication which makes contestation of what is communicated difficult — as a result of effectively limiting, as Bloch (1974, 1975) has observed, what can be said. Through these aspects, formalization also restricts application of the practices which it makes authoritative since performing them requires, because of the elaborate form which it imposes on them, skills which mainly those trained for this purpose have (i.e. the *manti*, or housegroup and community leaders, and the *belians*, or "shamans"). This effect is, in fact, partly the result of all the discussed aspects of formalization in that they each in their own way contribute to draw special attention to what takes place and confer on the situations in which authority is exercised a formal air, thereby deterring people lacking self-confidence and adequate prior experience of speaking on such occasions from playing a too prominent role in them. Formalization can be, however, and indeed is to quite an extent, used by ordinary people on other occasions than those which constitute official authority use, both as a strategy (as Udin did in and through his letter to his relatives), and out of concern with good form. Belying a stereotype of Southeast Asian hill tribe peoples "as direct, loud and straightforward" (see Errington 1989:293), the Bentian are remarkably form and

formalization minded, and these are not qualities solely of the powerful or the dominant in society, even though formalization seems to be intimately associated with authority.

Entextualization, in my applied understanding of the concept, represents another aspect of the form and organization of action which facilitates the use of authority. As just suggested, entextualization is, in fact, principally an effect of formalization. Increasing code structuring and code consistency, for example, function to enable identification of particular instances of authority use as manifestations of a recognizable cultural script (e.g. *adat*) which these instances themselves reproduce. However, there are also other, more specific aspects of the form and organization of action than the ones mentioned above which contribute to this process. Two closely related such aspects, which I have analyzed in several different contexts, are the indirectness and roundaboutness of formal speech and action which serve, as we have seen, in addition to enabling delicate address of sensitive issues, and lending a highly valued quality of refinement to such action, to associate the users of authority with the ancestors, who form a principal source of spiritual authority in Bentian society. Other aspects that I have analyzed which have much the same effects, are the use of reported speech, and the use of parallelism and other poetic devices.

Now, besides functioning to associate the particular with something more general, something else that such aspects of the form of action involving entextualization do is that they tend to function as decontextualizing devices, that is, they suppress, in some sense, the particular. Perhaps most important, what they do in this respect, is to de-emphasize the *agency* of the persons instigating or performing the actions in question, a fact which itself promotes the process of entextualization. Still another and crucially important effect that they have in so doing, which also facilitates the association of the particular with the general in its own way, is an exteriorization of the authority invoked through such action: authority comes to be seen as external to the person and the immediate social context by or in which it is exercised, another quality which contributes to making it difficult to contest the agent who exercises it.

A general characteristic of Bentian authority is, in fact, that it is construed as external in this respect. It is typically seen as deriving from — and it is legitimized with reference to — a source beyond the person or persons who exert authority, such as the government, the spirits, the ancestors, or *adat.* This aspect of Bentian authority is, of course, more than the result of ongoing processes of exteriorization; it is the result of what might be called a deep-seated socio-centrism which influences and characterizes most fields of social life among the Bentian.[234] In the view of this basic ideology and ontology, individual

[234] A similar argument has been advanced by Michael Jackson who identifies as a characteristic of premodern societies a tendency for "disavowal of the subject" as a source of authority and authorship. As he explains, this tendency "reflects a social order where cooperation is essential to survival and competition inimical to *communitas*. Power must be shared — and the so-called group ethic can thus be

subjectivity is not a source of legitimacy of action — unlike in the modern Western world where the self is commonly seen as something of an ultimate foundation of agency, indeed, in a sense, as the *highest authority*, over which no external authorities are to reign (cf. Connolly 1987:12-13). Rather, it seems that the legitimacy of Bentian authority, like the premodern authority that Hannah Arendt (1958) argues has become lost in the modern West, is seen to derive from something beyond individual subjectivity.

What this something beyond individual subjectivity consists of among the Bentian varies considerably, however, the only absolute requirement being that it should be collectively valued.[235] A common feature of it is, nevertheless, as I have argued in respect to authoritative words, that it is "transcendent of or distanced from the everyday here and now." To an important extent, it is what Rutherford calls "the foreign" which provides the sources of Bentian authority, that is, it is often seen as derived from outside the local society. Particularly influential in this respect are past and present governments, but the downriver world in general also frequently provides sources of authority, for example, in the form of traditions of literacy and *ilmu* (magic). However, the ancestors and the ancestral past, which also are distanced from, or at least transcendent of, the everyday here and now, have, until the present, been even more important in this respect, as has the institution of customary law, and among Kaharingan Bentians an inland religious tradition associated with the geographical center of the Luangan area provides another major source of authority. The Bentian's condition of being marginal to precolonial coastal polities and the postcolonial state — a condition which has generated what I, following Rutherford (2003), have called a "fetishization" of government authority — and associated perceptions of the Bentian as culturally and politically inferior to coastal and other interior peoples, have not made the Bentian's political geography, in Errington's (1989:300) terms, entirely "outward-looking," nor has it depleted local authority. Even though "foreign authority" is important among the Bentian — also in that it is, as we have seen, to an important extent constitutive of some forms of "local authority" such as the authority of the *manti* and of *adat* — there does not exist, as appears to be the case in Biak, a near-total hegemony of "foreign" authority (cf. Rutherford 2003). In part, this may be a reflection of the fact that the Bentian, unlike many eastern Indonesian peoples, regard themselves as autochthonous to the region that they inhabit and that they do not, in mythological or cosmological terms, regard vitality as originally derived from outside local society. More important, perhaps, external

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read as a positive affirmation of interpersonal relationships" (1998:59, orig. italics).

[235] This requirement is, of course, as I have already noted, a requirement not just of Bentian authority. Rather it is, as Simmel (1964:184), argued, a quality of authority *per se* that it must have an element of "super-subjective significance." Nevertheless, this requirement seems to me to represent, among the Bentian, the most generally applicable criterion of what Lukes (1978:640-41), borrowing a concept of Hart (1961, chap VI), refers to as "rules of recognition," that is, generally recognized social norms for what may count as authoritative.

influence has not eroded the social practices and values upon which local authority is predicated.

Another manner in which Bentian authority is commonly exteriorized is by being attributed to so-called supernatural agencies or forces. Association of authority with unseen or otherworldly forces is a frequently recognized feature of Asian and, in particular, of Southeast Asian, societies (e.g. see Pye 1985; Geertz 1980), and is commonly linked to the capacity not just of strengthening, but also of naturalizing, authority. Among, the Bentian, this association takes, as I have noted, many forms. In the form of various "social taboos" (*tapen, pali, bunsung, sumbang*) sanctioned by the possibility of spirit attack or misfortune, it reinforces, among other things, kinship authority, and the authority of *adat,* which, in addition, is considered to be protected by the god-like *seniang besarah*. In the form of ritual it consecrates what I, following Durkheim, have called the "authority of society" but it also advances the ambitions of individual agents laying claims to political authority and the varied authorization concerns of ordinary community members who put this "authorizing device" into use. Spirit support is the principal resource acquired through association with the supernatural, whether in ritual or more generally, although accumulation of soul strength and potency are also factors of some importance both in respect to acquisition of political authority and in the sense of enabling agency through attainment of "existential control." However, the importance of potency or "soul stuff" in Bentian society does not seem quite as great as it has been described to be elsewhere in Southeast Asia (e.g. see Errington 1989; Kruyt 1906; Walker 2002; Wolters 1982). There is not, for example, a similar obsession with "read[ing] each other and objects as signs of potency" as there is in South Sulawesi or an equally pervasive "preoccupation with accumulating it" (cf. Errington 1989:290). The accumulation of "potency" and soul strength is also, in the first place, principally a ritual endeavor and, in the second place, it partly represents a metaphorically expressed concern with problems and aspirations of the self and society. Generally speaking, the religious dimension of Bentian authority does not seem quite as central as it could appear to be according to the ethnography of the region. Walker's (2002:17) identification of the political cultures of northwest Borneo as "cosmological," for example, or his view that, among the peoples in this area, "the natural was a microcosm of a supernatural macrocosm" seem overstated if applied to the Bentian case. Most essentially, I have argued in this thesis, Bentian authority is socially constituted, and its articulations with interpersonal relations and local and extralocal political processes are more important concerns for Bentians than its articulations with supernatural relations. This is true in respect to political authority (including the authority of *adat*), but even ritual, as we have seen, frequently addresses social as much as supernatural concerns, and the social world is, of course, the primary reference in the case of the application of kinship authority as well. Contrasting with religious beliefs and orientations, there is also among the Bentian

a rather secular "everyday scepticism" in the form of what I have called the "authority of experience" which, although not elevated to the status of an ideology in public discourse, is a factor significantly affecting agency. As this tendency indicates, not all authority among the Bentian is transcendent or exteriorized in the sense of being seen as derived from beyond personal experience, even though Bentian authority typically is legitimated through reference to sources outside of individual (and frequently also human) subjectivity.

An important expression of the social constitution of Bentian authority, and a prominent general characteristic of it, is that it tends to be associated with integrative, or more generally relation-affirming aspirations, especially when it is publicly and saliently exercised, or when it is most formalized. This characteristic is apparent in all the three principal analytical chapters of this thesis. It was illustrated perhaps most vividly by the outcome of Udin's *perkara* and the subsequent formal deliberations which determined that he should stay in Temiang against his will because this was in the interests of the community, but also, in a negative way, so to speak, by his eventual furtive departure from the village some time afterwards. However, it has been brought out in various other connections as well. In fact, integrative and relation-affirming values could well be said to represent the essence of kinship as a moral code as well as that of *adat* (customary law). It is also something that the ancestors and the godly *seniang* spirits in a very basic and conspicuous sense represent, as well as something that Bentians perceive, even though somewhat more ambiguously, the *manti*, and on occasion even the government, to represent. Another indication of this tendency of authority is the fact that it is frequently and conspicuously associated with attempts at some form of "concentration," including concentration of family and relatives, of vitality and potency in the form of soul strength, protecting spirits and spirit familiars, and of leadership constituencies and administrative units. As we have seen, concentration is, in all three social fields investigated — kinship, religion, and politics — and on all levels of Bentian society — the individual, family, and community — both a principal generalized strategy for obtaining authority as well as a goal and a value for whose sake authority is exercised.

Besides this association of authority with concentration, a similarly salient and two-way association of authority with a range of other socio-centric values provides additional examples of the tendency of authority to be bound up with integrative or relation-affirming aspirations. These values — which are frequently invoked and almost inviolable in the sense that no one would publicly contest them *per se* — include such much-discussed and highly authoritative qualities as relation-maintenance, reciprocity, respect, sharing, non-confrontation, unanimity, and tradition. These virtues are, of course, centrally important in Bentian society, not only in the application of authority, but more generally as well — as a condition which in itself contributes in several different respects to the effectiveness of authority in Bentian society. A particularly significant aspect of

their importance is that they (including concentration) are, in fact, associated with the exercise of authority even when authority *is not* used for integrative or relation-affirming purposes. Authority is, as has been amply illustrated, by no means *always* used for such purposes. But, an important *consequence* of the invocation and exercise of authority in Bentian society, regardless of its *motives*, is precisely that it tends to involve the reproduction of these values. This is the result of the fact that an explicit celebration of these values forms an ingrained and constitutive aspect of the rhetoric of the *manti*, as well as an integral component of ritual chants, in addition to their being tacitly communicated by various symbols and practical arrangements associated with the formal exercise of authority (e.g. by congregation, commensality, plate exchange, and formality). Thus, relation-affirming values are associated with authority not only because people aspire to affirm their relations, but also because of how the exercise of authority on public occasions is institutionalized or conventionalized in Bentian society, that is, because of how the relatively invariable *form* of this exercise expresses these values. This, it may be noted, thus represents another important aspect of the form of action which contributes to make Bentian authority authoritative.

Now, what all of this can be taken to express is that Bentian society is highly socio-centric. In that respect, these findings regarding Bentian authority confirm Malinowski's (e.g. 1947:118-121,180) and Hoebel's (1958:225,227) observation that authority in small-scale, non-centralized societies tends to be what Hoebel labels "altruistic." "Altruism," in this sense, is indeed a prominent characteristic of Bentian authority. A major consequence of it is that it functions to instill, in Durkheim's terms, the "authority of society" (1995:16), or, a value-system extolling relations and community — as well as what I call a moral economy, a mode of exchanging resources and services according to such relation-affirming principles. Conversely, to the extent that authority is perceived as legitimate among the Bentian, this is largely a question of how well it corresponds to this value-system. It is resonance with this value-system which, among other things, has induced me to characterize *adat* as an institutionalized morality, kinship as a moral code, plate exchange as a practice serving to regulate socially disruptive sentiments, and *manti*ship as an institution closely associated with the promotion of the common good — and thus to describe Bentian authority as basically value-rational.

Important as it is, however, this aspect of Bentian authority does not represent the whole picture — far from it. Bentian authority has what I have called two sides, or a dual character. Cognatic and affinal kinship, a*dat*, religious authority and ritual, leadership positions and government connections — in principle, everything that is authoritative or provides sources of authority in Bentian society — can be, and on occasion is, used for purposes of obtaining personal advantage, social differentiation and even social division, even though when this happens it typically occurs covertly, the actions amounting to it being what Bourdieu (1977:191) calls "euphemized." Analogously, a

description of Bentian society as socio-centric is, of course, not appropriate in all respects, as suggested by Joseph Weinstock's (1983a:117) contrary characterization of the Luangan (of whom the Bentian form a subgroup) as "individualistic by nature," a characterization which is justified in some respects, even though it clearly does not represent the whole picture either. Alongside contrary aspirations, there exist in Bentian society strong desires for autonomy — both in the sense of autonomy *vis-à-vis* the larger, national society, and in the sense of autonomy *vis-à-vis* the local society — and for much of the time many Bentians indeed stay (in comparison with their neighbors, for instance) rather autonomous — in both senses. An important expression and realization of these desires is that people, especially young adults, often keep to their farmhouses precisely in order to evade authority: dispersion, also motivated by subsistence considerations, indeed represents a principal factor which counterbalances centripetal forces in Bentian society. There are also strong predilections not to share, to keep things for oneself (not weakened by the difficulty of doing so). Against the officially sanctioned image of long rows of plates of rice served to guests stands unacknowledged and covert, but equally real, practices such as that of nighttime eating.

To some extent, the superficially contradictory depiction of Bentian authority as both altruistic and individualistic is, of course, nothing but an expression of the fact, emphatically declared by Malinowski (see 1947:118), that an inherent aspect of authority is that it involves the potential of abuse, even in small-scale societies where there typically exists an ideology and certain conditions significantly restricting such abuse (e.g. the necessity of direct relations between superordinates and subordinates, and a high degree of interdependence between them, both conditions which were discussed by Malinowski 1947:119,121). However, this duality is also a reflection of the existence in this society of certain sources of authority — such as government authority, potency and soul strength — which are not primarily, or at least not unambiguously, predicated upon these socio-centric values, and of certain rather prevalent amoral or self-consciously immoral aspirations — such as autonomy, *amour propre* or "will to power" — which are not publicly recognized as ideals, but which nevertheless represent hidden or suppressed values, which in their own way contribute to the legitimacy, or at least the appeal, of much authority in Bentian society.

Illuminating in this respect, is, for instance, the fact that *manti*ship is in part legitimated and naturalized by what I have argued is an egalitarian ideology according to which it is principally ambition or will to power which makes some people want to become *manti*, and thus entitled to hold this position (since it makes *manti* status appear theoretically attainable by anyone). As we have seen, two somewhat contradictory types of charisma may also favorably contribute to the authority of the *manti*: the one is centered on such characteristics as composure, dignity, and deference, and based on socio-centric values, and the other is centered on such features as enterprise, zeal, and

forcefulness, and based upon individualistic (egalitarian) values, as well as, to an extent, on considerations of goal-rationality. Considerations of goal-rationality also balance any value-rational considerations in that it is seen that viable local leadership must, at least to some extent, accommodate government regulations and expectations, many of which are incompatible with local values, in fact, with both individualistic and socio-centric ones. For most people, certain values associated with either the postcolonial government (e.g. development, order) or with the colonial or precolonial ones (hierarchy) also represent, to a greater or lesser degree, personal values, or at least aspirations. As I have observed, a notion, probably originating in the "era of the great *manti,*" during which community leaders received titles from the sultan of Kutai, that leaders should be of *manti* descent and succession to leadership be hereditary is still to some extent affirmed, even though compromised by certain long-standing local and some more recent government-imposed notions. Rank-specific a*dat* regulations, as we have seen, also used to promote aspirations for social differentiation, and the institution of *adat* have all along functioned to create a position of dominance for the *manti* in the society, which individual *manti* have been using, in varying proportions, for the common good and for their own interest.

More than the result of officially unsanctioned aspirations which are at odds with integrative and relation-affirming ideals, however, individualistic and differentiating use of authority is also actively brought about by the social production of authority in the particular society investigated (and in others resembling it), as well as enabled by the roundabout and ostensibly relation-affirming form that the exercise of authority in it typically takes. More precisely, the very same processes through which the authority of society is established — lawsuits, rituals, ceremonial exchange, public discussion — establish the authority of some people over other people as well as spur these unsanctioned aspirations, and they facilitate — surreptitiously or by invoking some higher principle — authorization of actions and situations which are at variance with the ideals that they purportedly sanction. An example of this is the payment of white plates which, at the same time as it serves to regulate socially disruptive sentiments and facilitate cooperation, functions to reproduce these socially disruptive sentiments as a result of spotlighting concerns of reciprocity. Another is religious ritual, which can tacitly advance status distinctions as a by-product, or be put to use to legitimate conditions which breach *adat* as a result of invoking the all-excusing blessing of the spirit authorities.

What is vital to know about Bentian society is that "distinctions and lasting obligations," in Bourdieu's (1977:195) phrase, are produced *at one and the same time, and by the same means*. Establishing dominance or distinction, or generally advancing self-interest, is a delicate business; it has to be done in and through relations of mutual dependence, and it has to be concealed as something else, as disinterested activity

designed to promote the common good. In a way, this is the result of the hegemony of socio-centric values in the society — making antagonistic values if perhaps not yet, as Bourdieu (1977:196) would seem to suggest, "unthinkable," then at least to some extent *unspeakable* — as well as of the socio-material conditions which engender interdependence. For these reasons, Bentian society, like pre-capitalistic societies in general, has, in Bourdieu's (1977:192) words, an essentially "dual economy." It is at one and the same time disinterested, or altruistic, and interested, or individualistic — and it is not only the economy which conforms to this logic, but the social economy as a whole, that is, all interaction in society relating to the production or distribution of scarce and valued resources, whether material or symbolic, including authority (cf. Bourdieu 1977:178). An illustrative example, which relates simultaneously to the acquisition of wealth and authority, is the nineteenth century institution of *roing*, or formal exchange expeditions. *Roing* clearly was "interested" and even somewhat predatory in character (as was in part also the accumulation of potency through *naiyu* spirits, which could be acquired through bloodshed), at the same time as it was presented in an idiom of voluntary gift exchange and alliance building. And it is, of course, because of the hegemony of socio-centric values that the dominant position of the *manti* is construed in terms of what I have called social worth or differential moral evaluation: because the only really legitimate accumulation of capital is the accumulation of symbolic capital. However, this should not be allowed to conceal the fact that the *manti* have, at least in part, what Bourdieu (1977:194) calls "a vested interest in virtue," or that "all structures of inseparably material and symbolic exchange (i.e. involving both circulation and communication) function as ideological machines whenever the *de facto* state of affairs which they tend to legitimate by transforming a contingent social relationship into a recognized relationship is an unequal balance of power" (Bourdieu 1977:195).

There is, however, little power, especially in the way of coercive power, available to the *manti,* or anyone else in Bentian society, even though there are some sanctions that can be brought into play in order to compel compliance, including the withdrawal of legal, ritual, farmwork, and material assistance. This is in large part an indication of the fact that authority in Bentian society — with the partial exception of the authority exercised by those *manti* who hold government positions — is mostly exercised outside positions associated with a right or possibility to employ legitimate force. The ability of the *manti* to influence people is primarily based on a relative monopoly to publicly define social reality (cf. Kelly 1993:508), a prerogative whose usefulness is essentially a function of their talking skills. This makes most *manti* rather vulnerable to public opinion, and critically dependent on what social capital they can obtain through active effort. In this respect their predominantly acquired authority is very much constituted through social relations, and it is, as a rule, closely proportionate to the measure of effort that they invest in their relations. And in this regard, too, their authority requires a value-

rational foundation (typically made up of both socio-centric and individualistic components), that is, "it can only be lastingly maintained through actions whose conformity to the values recognized by the group is a practical reaffirmation of that authority" (Bourdieu 1977:193).

What all of this testifies to is the already mentioned proposition — which notably applies to authority in all relations, as well as to the authority involved in processes of self-authorization — that authority is complexly embedded in society. More precisely, it suggests that the constitution of authority is embedded, first, in the value-system of the society, and second, in concrete social relationships and contexts. Authority is, of course, not only about values. Values are insufficient on their own as determinants of agency (cf. Parsons 1958:198). This reflects the fact that they are so general that it is not clear how and to what extent they should be applied in specific social situations — and that they are often not associated with any concrete, situation-specific rules, as I have observed with respect to the field of Bentian kinship. But, values generally seem to lack what we might call a force of their own. In order to become effective, they have to become socio-materially mediated. As with power or authority, it is their translation into actor-networks which generates their energy. Convincing evidence on this point is provided by the fact that kinship ideology sometimes is invoked, whereas sometimes it simply is not, or that *adat* has to be enacted in order to become important. Another example that can be proposed, which deserves special attention because of the importance given to it by Max Weber, is that of tradition.

Like kinship ideology, tradition may or may not be invoked. It often is, but nothing has stopped some Bentians from ceasing to observe it. The fact that in the 1990s many Bentians, unlike many other Dayaks, continued to practice aspects of tradition, including, for example, what I have called a moral economy, and others such as polyandry that entailed a stigmatization of them as "primitive" (and which were not even given recognition as *adat*), was not the result of the particularly strong hold that the imperative of tradition had on them. Rather, it was, as I have argued, the result of the persistence of certain social circumstances under which the practice of these aspects of tradition was motivated or pressing. If these circumstances — which are central, I argue, in shaping the ontology of those living under them — would cease to exist, the authority of tradition would be lost, as would that of a whole range of other values which I have identified as central in Bentian society. For this reason, then, it would seem unwarranted and indeed somewhat misleading to privilege tradition by classifying Bentian authority as essentially traditional. Also, tradition is — even though it undeniably represents an important value, especially in discourse — only one among many values which legitimate Bentian authority, or motivate Bentian actions, and some of these values, like relation-maintenance, reciprocity, and sharing — which are, in a sense, what gives tradition its substance — are no less influential. Similarly, it would be unjustified, I think, to

categorize Bentian authority as charismatic. In the first place, not all people exercising authority are charismatic, and in the second place, it is ultimately other values which give charisma, like tradition, its substance. Moreover, the concept of charisma primarily accounts only for the authority of certain persons, but not for other authority — the authority of *adat*, or ritual, for instance, or that of the government. Thus, it seems that the authority types that Weber used to describe premodern authority are insufficient for an understanding of Bentian authority, especially the constitution of authority, rather than more restrictively with its legitimation. Rather than as traditional or charismatic, it would seem preferable to characterize Bentian authority as value-rational, a concept which Weber never developed, even though he notably did, in *Economy and Society* (1978:36) talk about "value-rational faith," alongside the categories of "affectual faith," "tradition," and "legality," as principal categories by virtue of which "actors may ascribe legitimacy to a social order," before, later in the book, introducing his typology of authority types, from which the value-rational category is missing. However, in order to satisfactorily account for the constitution of authority in Bentian society, this notion of the value-rationality of Bentian authority would, as just indicated, need to be complemented with a notion of its socio-material mediation. It is the presentation of values in concrete social action, and their articulation through social action with particular people, material conditions, and practical interests, which determine if and to what extent the individual actor is influenced by them, and hence, to what extent he or she experiences the sources of authority which are drawn upon in the exercise of authority, or in processes of self-authorization, as authoritative.

Appendix 1: Bentian Kinship Terminology

Terms are given in descending genealogical order, beginning with terms for the most senior relatives. Terms marked with "A" are only used for address and terms marked with "R" are only used for reference. Terms not marked with "A" or "R" are used for both reference and address.

1. *kakah datu*: grandparent's father; grandparent's parent's male sibling; spouse's grandparent's father (A)
2. *itak datu*: grandparent's mother; grandparent's parent's female sibling; spouse's grandparent's mother (A)
3. *kakah*: grandfather; grandparent's male siblings; spouse's grandfather (A)
4. *itak*: grandmother; grandparent's female siblings; spouse's grandmother (A)
5. *uma*: father; father's brother, father's close male cousin (A); spouse's father (A)
6. *uma amu*: adoptive father (R); father's brother or close male cousin (R)
7. *ine*: mother; mother's sister, mother's close female cousin (A); spouse's mother (A)
8. *ine amu*: adoptive mother (R); mother's sister or close female cousin (R)
9. *tuo*: parent's elder sibling or cousin; spouse's parents' elder sibling or cousin (A)
10. *burok*: parent's younger sibling or cousin; spouse's parents' younger sibling or cousin (A)
11. *tamo*: parent's siblings or cousin (A); spouse's parent's sibling or cousin (A)
12. *tupu*: spouse's parent (R); spouse's parent's sibling/cousin (R)
13. *erai butung*: sibling (R)
14. *peyari*: sibling; cognatic collateral relative; any collateral relative
15. *tuke*: ego's elder sibling; ego's elder cousin (A)
16. *ani*: ego's elder sibling; ego's elder cousin (A)
17. *soong tumar* (female speaker only): brother or close male parallel cousin (R)
18. *bawén tumar* (male speaker only): sister or close female parallel cousin (R)
19. *nuarsinai* (or *tepesinai*): first cousin (R)
20. *nuardue* (or *tepedue*): second cousin (R)
21. *nuartolu* (or *tepetolu*): third cousin (R)
22. *nuaropat* (or *tepeopat*): fourth cousin (R)
23 *nuarlime* (or *tepelime*):fifth cousin (R)
24. *sanget*: child's spouse's parent
25. *bane*: husband
26. *sao*: wife
27. *meruoi* (or *meruei*): "co-spouse" (in polygamous union)
28. *ruoi* (or *ruei*): spouse's sibling's spouse

29a. *ayu* (male speaker): spouse's sibling or cousin; sibling's or cousin's spouse

29b. *ayu* (female speaker): spouse's brother or male cousin; sister's or cousin's husband

30. *ongan* (female speaker only): brother's or cousin's wife; husband's sister or female cousin

31. *anak*: child; same sex sibling's/cousin's child (A); child's spouse (A)

32 *anak amu*: adopted child (R); same sex sibling's/cousin's child (R)

33. *akén*: different sex sibling's/cousin's child: distant same sex sibling's child

34. *benantu*: child's spouse; sibling's/cousin's child's spouse (A)

35. *opo*: grandchild; sibling's/cousin's grandchild (A)

36. *inking*: grandchild's child; sibling's/cousin's grandchild's child (A)

37. *piyut*: grandchild's grandchild

38. *alep* (*aleu*): grandchild's grandchild's child (?)

Appendix 2: Glossary

aben: family, kin group

adat (*adet*): customary law; tradition; proper behavior

balai: shrine in which offerings to spirits are presented

basa mengkelotes: roundabout or indirect language; a positively valued feature of ritual language and the language of judicial procedures, also regarded as having been characteristic of the ancestors

belian: ritual expert who officiate at "life rituals" (*belian bolum*)

belian sentiu: distinct *belian* ritual style largely conducted in Kutai Malay and influenced by the ritual traditions of the sultanate of Kutai

benua: village; used both for nucleated present-day villages and the territorially dispersed settlements of past communities

beru: collective labor, especially of rice field work groups functioning according to the priniciple of balanced reciprocity

blis: generic designation for principally malevolent spirits or spirits which are addressed in the capacity as soul thieves in rituals

buntang: multipurpose extended family or house group ritual typically lasting four or eight days involving thanksgiving, supplication, and curing

desa (I.): nucleated, permanent village; distinguished from the territorially dispersed settlements of past communities

gombok: secondary mortuary ritual typically lasting seven or fourteen days during which the souls of the deceased are escorted to their afterworldly locations

juus: soul, the animate principle of living humans and animals.

kaben: generic term for "relative" used both in a narrow sense for cognatic relatives and in a broad sense including affinal and classificatory relatives

Kaharingan: a term designating the traditional religion of the Barito group Dayaks, officially recognized under the name of Hindu-Kaharingan since 1980

kekuasaan (*pengewasa*): authority; potency; magical power

kelelungan: the refined head soul of the dead which is escorted to the village of Tenangkai in heaven during *gombok*

kepala adat: head of customary law; government office in Kalimantan which among the Bentian is typically held by descendants of the "great *manti* " (*manti solai*)

kepala desa: village head; salaried government office under the Indonesian government, only occasionally occupied by the *manti*

kwangkai (or *gombok mpe selimat*): secondary mortuary ritual involving exhumation of the dead person's bones

liau: the coarse body soul of the deceased which is escorted to Mount Lumut in heaven during *gombok*

longan: certain upright, temporary or permanent, ritual structures serving as places of congregation for spirits during rituals

longan teluyen: a permanent *longan* made of ironwood serving as the ritual center of *lou* and a place of storage for ancestral valuables

lou: large house serving as residence for several families

lou solai: grand *lou*; large lou serving as gathering place for an entire village

manti: community leader; house group or family head; adjudicator

masyarakat adat (I.): society which to a large extent still follows customary law and enjoys a restricted degree of political autonomy *vis-à-vis* the Indonesian government

masyarakat terasing (I.): term used by the Indonesian government for isolated and allegedly estranged societies regarded to be in need of intensive development guidance

mementian: a certain style of collectively planting rice characteristic of some Bentian communities

matek: to instruct someone; like *siu* and *sake* a designation for a special, "framed" situation in which the activity referred to occurs

musyawarah (I.): negotiations, deliberations

mulung: spirit familiars of the *belian* and the *warah*

naiyu: heterogenous category of protecting and guardian spirits which animate the longan and other objects anointed with blood

nalin taun: community purification and thanksgiving ritual lasting minimally sixteen days

nuak: entertaining and presenting gifts to the formally invited members of another community (or kin group) during a *nalin taun* (or *buntang*)

pali: taboo or restriction; category of spirits enforcing the observance of *pali*

pemerintah (I.): generic designation for past and present governments

perkara: lawsuit

pengiring: protecting spirits; including, most prominently, the *naiyu*

penyentuhu: spirit-associated objects used for oath-taking and general assistance in *perkara* by the *manti*

peyari: sibling; collateral relative

pusaka: heirlooms, including a subtype of ancestral objects stored by the *longan* and anointed with blood of sacrificial animals during *buntang*

puun: trunk or source; used of elders and houses (*lou*) who stand in a structural position of precedence, and in that capacity hold authority and responsibility over, some other people or houses, that represent the tips (*lai*) or branches (pakaak) of the *puun*

roing: a term designating a category of formal exchange expeditions to other communities that were carried out by large groups of men in the nineteenth century

ruye: ritual paraphernalia; the material setup of rituals, a central aspect of the latter

sake: to ask someone for something (see *matek*)

semerem: subtype of spirit-associated ancestral valuables serving to protect political leadership

seniang: heavenly guardian spirits which regulate fundamental conditions in nature and society

siu: to order someone to do something (see *matek*)

tapen: failure to participate in social exchange or the ensuing state of soul weakness and susceptibility to spirit attack

tatau: great manti; manti with an unusually wide sphere of influence

tempuun: myths which recount the origins of natural phenomena and cultural institutions; recited mainly in chanted form during larger rituals (*buntang, gombok, nalin taun*)

temangung, singa, mangku etc.: titles that were assigned to Bentian leaders by the sultans of Kutai

ulun tuha one: "the elders of bygone days"; term designating the ancestors which is frequently invoked as a source of legitimation in discourse

utek tuha longan: skulls of ancestors associated with protecting spirits that are stored by the *longan* and anointed with blood during rituals

utek layau: skull of enemy or outsider also associated with protecting spirits and anointed with blood during rituals

warah: religious expert officiating at rituals principally engaged with treatment of the souls of the dead

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